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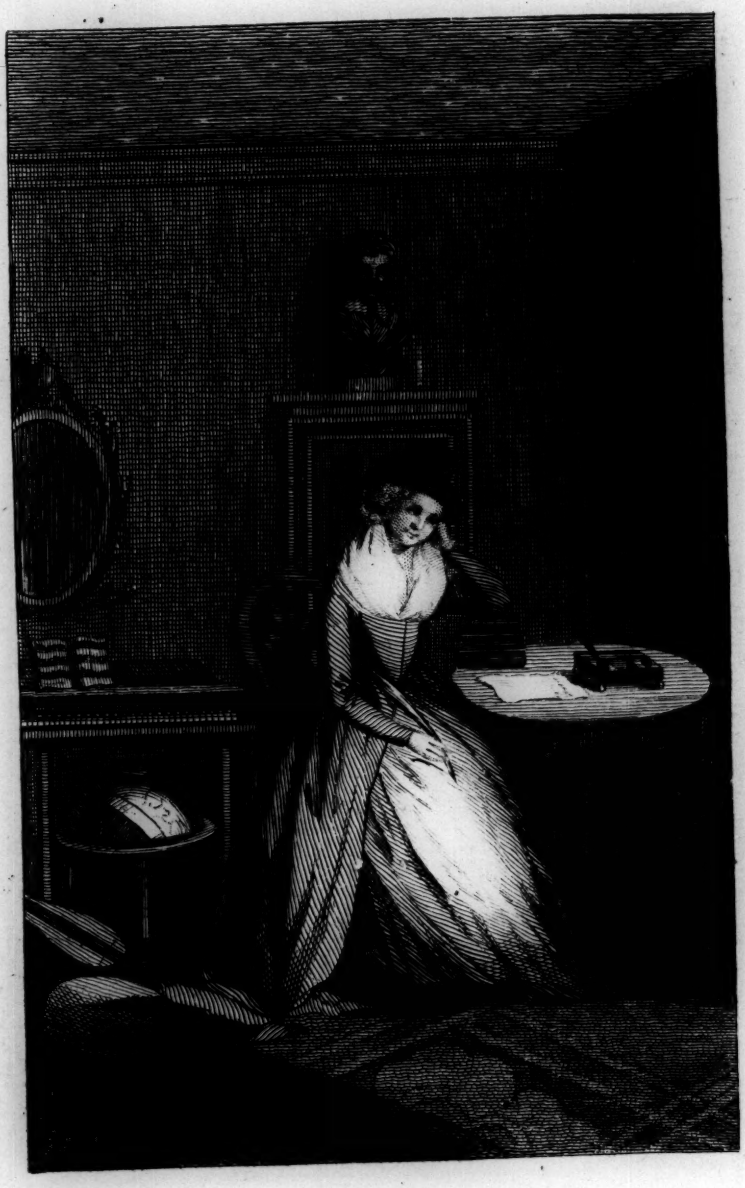

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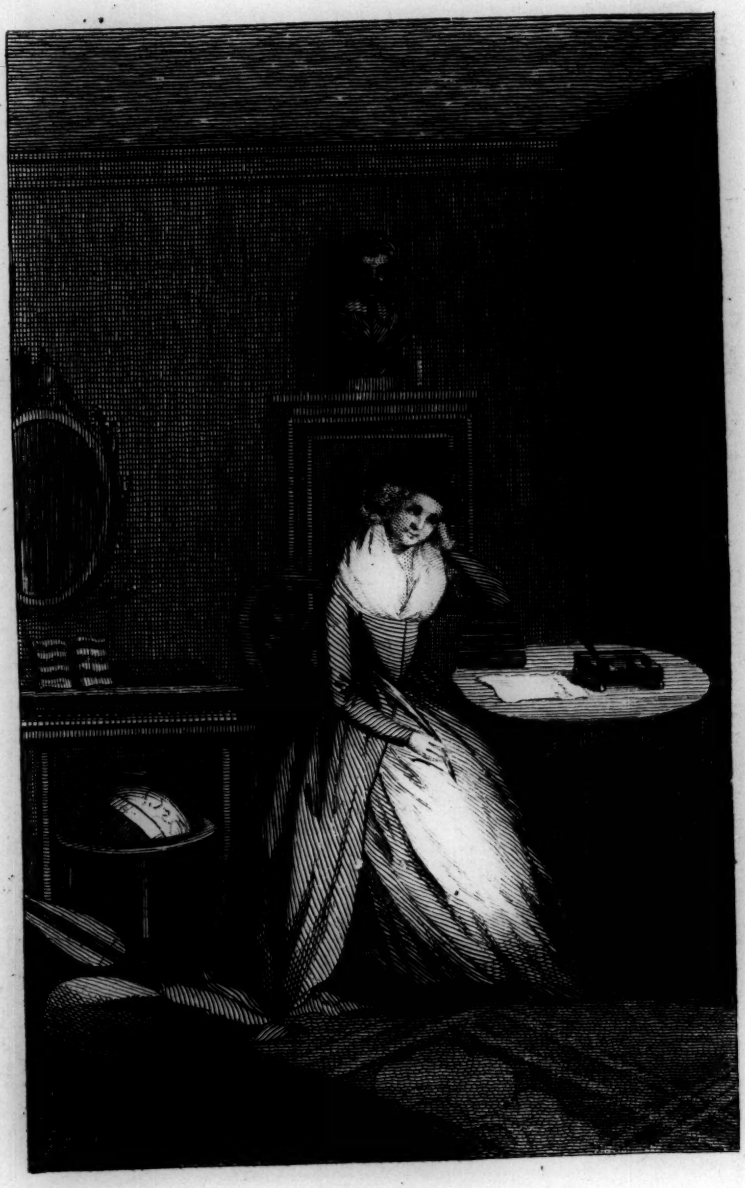

THE

POLITE LADY;

OR, A COURSE OF

FEMALE EDUCATION.

IN A

SERIES of LETTERS,

From a MOTHER to her DAUGHTER.

'Tis Education forms the tender Mind,
Juſt as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclin'd.

POPE.

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON.
Printed for THOMAS CARNAN, in ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.
MDCCLXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

GOVERNESSES

OF

LADIES' Boarding Schools

IN

GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND,

THE FOLLOWING

LETTERS

UPON

FEMALE EDUCATION

ARE,

With the greateſt deference and reſpect,

INSCRIBED

BY THEIR

Moſt humble and obedient Servant,

THE EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SHOULD any one be curious enough to inquire, why the following letters (which were originally written for the private inſtruction of a daughter) are now offered to the public, the author has only this to anſwer, that, as they had contributed, in a great meaſure, to form the character of a young lady, who not only in the partial opinion of a fond parent, but even in the impartial judgment of the world, is allowed to be one of the moſt accompliſhed women of the age, ſhe was deſirous of putting them into the hands of her younger daughters, which

could not be ſo conveniently done in manuſcript, as in print.

Beſides, ſhe was made to believe, that they might be of ſome little uſe to the female ſex in general; becauſe, though all mothers were as willing, and many were more capable than her to direct the education and form the manners of their daughters, yet that few had ſo much leiſure to digeſt their inſtructions into a regular method. By this, however, ſhe does not mean to inſinuate, that ſhe has been ſtrictly methodical: ſhe is ſenſible ſhe has not; though, ſhe flatters herſelf, ſhe has been ſufficiently ſo to avoid all perplexity and confuſion.

Nor does ſhe pretend to have exhauſted the ſubject, or to have laid down ſuch a perfect plan of female education, as will exactly ſuit the temper and capacities of all young ladies; theſe are ſo infinitely various and different, that no ſingle plan, however compre-

comprehenſive, can poſſibly anſwer the purpoſe. 'Tis the duty of every mother to inſiſt particularly on the acquiſition of thoſe accompliſhments, which are moſt ſuitable to her daughter's rank and ſtation, and on the correction of thoſe foibles, to which ſhe is naturally moſt inclined.

For this reaſon it is, that the author of theſe letters has been more diffuſe on ſome ſubjects, and more conciſe on others, than, without this diſtinction, might ſeem to be proper. But, though ſhe has endeavoured to adapt her inſtructions to the capacity of the young lady, to whom they were, at firſt, addreſſed, yet ſhe imagines, that, by a little variation, they may be eaſily accommodated to that of any other.

In a word, ſhe has attempted, according to her weak abilities, to recommend the ſtudy and practice of all thoſe virtues and good qualities, which, in her opinion, conſtitute the character

ter of a polite and accompliſhed lady; and, if, in this attempt, ſhe eſcape cenſure, ſhe does not aſpire to fame. From the former, ſhe hopes, the indulgence, which the good-natured part of the world have ever ſhewn to the female ſex, will, in ſome meaſure, protect her; and to the latter, ſhe is not vain enough (though a woman) to think ſhe has any juſt pretence.

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THE

THE POLITE LADY.

LETTER I.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

WHILE you lived under my immediate care and inſpection, I endeavoured to ſet before you a good example, and to inſtil into your tender mind ſuch maxims of virtue and prudence, as were ſuitable to your age and capacity. --But, now that your are ſettled in Mrs. Bromley's boarding-ſchool, I can no longer follow this method of inſtruction. However, what I cannot perform in perſon, I will endeavour to ſupply by letters. For, though you are removed out of my ſight, you are not, for all that, baniſhed from my thoughts. On the contrary, your are more in them now than ever. I feel my concern for your happineſs rather increaſed

than diminiſhed by abſence; and I confeſs, that nothing in this world would give me ſo much pleaſure, as to ſee you, one day, prove an accompliſhed woman. To enable you to become ſuch, no advantages of education ſhall be wanting. Mrs. Bromley is a woman of ſuch approved abilities and fidelity, that there is no danger of any neglect on her part; and the beſt advice and directions I can give, you ſhall receive in a ſeries of letters, which I propoſe to write to you from time to time; and, I hope, I ſhall have the pleaſure of ſeeing the good effect they have upon you, by your daily improvement in knowledge and virtue.

Firſt of all then, my dear Sophy, let me adviſe you to obey Mrs. Bromley in every thing ſhe commands. She is a gentlewoman of ſo much good ſenſe, that ſhe will deſire you to do nothing but what is reaſonable; and, I know, ſhe will explain to you the reaſonableneſs of all her injunctions, where you are able to comprehend it: and, where you are not, you muſt take it for granted, that they are for your real inetreſt and advantage. In a word, you muſt behave to her with all the reſpect and obdience of a child; as, I am confident, ſhe will treat you with all the affection and tenderneſs of a parent. Your next care muſt be to procure the love and

eſteem

eſteem of your ſchool-fellows, by an inoffenſive and obliging behaviour. Hurt nobody; ſpeak ill of nobody; tell no lies of any body; but do to every one all the kind and civil offices you can. Lying, indeed, is a vice I never found you guilty of; and, I believe, I might have ſpared my advice on that head.

But there is another vice, againſt which I would caution you, I mean tale-bearing: not that I ever perceived you more inclined to this vice than any other, but becauſe you will now, perhaps, be under ſtronger temptations to the commiſſion of it; and, becauſe, of all others, it will render you moſt odious to your companions. The nature and limitations of this vice I ſhall explain to you more fully in ſome ſucceeding letter, when you will be more capable of underſtanding me. As many of your companions are much older than you, and farther advanced in their learning, take care to pay them that reſpect and deference which is due to their ſuperior age and knowledge; eſpecially, if, at any time, they are employed by the governeſs or teachers to direct you in your taſks.

I have got a thouſand things beſides to ſay to you; but theſe muſt be the Subjects of ſome future letters. Let me adviſe you, however, before I conclude, to be punctual in ſaying your prayers every morning and

evening. You know I gave you peremptory inſtructions on this head at parting, and, I hope, you will not forget them. I expect to hear a good account of your behaviour and improvement from Mrs. Bromley, who has promiſed to write to me now and then. Farewell, my dear Sophy: may God Almighty bleſs you, and preſerve you from all evil! I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER II.

My dear SOPHY,

I Had lately the pleaſure of hearing from Mrs. Bromley, that you make great progreſs in learning your Engliſh, and that ſhe expects you will ſoon be one of the beſt readers in the ſchool. To be able to read with propriety, is certainly a very genteel accompliſhment, and not ſo eaſy to be acquired as moſt people imagine; and, perhaps, you will not find one woman in five hundred that is poſſeſſed of it. There are ſo many faulty ways of reading, which young people are apt to run into, that it is difficult

difficult to avoid them all; and when once a bad habit is contracted, it is almoſt impoſſible to correct it.

There is your Aunt Filmer, who reads with ſuch a canting tone as grates the ears of the whole company. She has frequently almoſt ſung me to ſleep, though reading one of the moſt diverting books in the world. Your couſin Pulteney, you know, reads with ſuch hurry and rapidity, and ſuch neglect of the proper ſtops and pauſes, that the moſt attentive hearer cannot underſtand one ſentence ſhe pronounces; whilſt Mrs. Daſhwood reads in ſuch a ſlow and ſlovenly manner, and draws out the words to ſuch an immoderate length, that nobody has patience to follow her. Mrs. Nugent reads with ſuch a loud and ſhrill voice as ſtuns the ears of the whole audience. It might do very well in a public aſſembly, but is altogether unfit for a tea-table: whereas Miſs Littleton's accent is ſo faint and feeble, that you muſt apply your ear almoſt to her mouth, before you can undeſtand the ſubject.

I would, therefore, have you form yourſelf upon the example of your governeſs, who, indeed, is one of the beſt readers I ever heard. She reads with the ſame eaſy natural voice as ſhe uſes in converſation. She obſerves the ſtops and pauſes with great

exactneſs. She reads ſo ſlow as to be eaſily underſtood by any perſon, who will give a proper attention, and is not abſolutely dull; and yet ſo faſt, as not to diſtguſt thoſe of the quickeſt apprehenſion. Her voice ſhe carefully adapts to the number and extent of her audience. When ſhe reads to a large company, her voice is high without being ſhrill; when to a ſmall one, it is low, but withal diſtinct. In a word, ſhe is a complete miſtreſs of the art of reading; and you cannot fail to become ſo too, if you imitate her manner, and follow her directions. There are, beſides, ſome niceties in reading; which, I am afraid, are above your comprehenſion at preſent: but when you are farther advanced in your learning, I will explain them to you in ſome future letter. Your Papa, your brothers, and ſiſters join me in offering our love to you.

I am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER

LETTER III.

My dear SOPHY,

THERE is nothing gives me ſo much pleaſure as to hear of your happineſs and welfare, and your daily improvement in learning. If I know my own heart, I have an equal affection for all my children; but, whatever be the reaſon, I always receive greater pleaſure from hearing an account of your improvement, than from ſeeing that of your little ſiſters and brothers, who are immediately under my eye. Whether this be owing to ſome partial fondneſs for you, or that my affection is ſtrengthened and increaſed by abſence, I cannot tell: but ſo it is in fact. It was therefore, my dear, with the greateſt joy I received a letter lately from Mrs. Bromley, informing me of the quick progreſs you make in writing, and that I might ſoon expect to receive a letter from yourſelf. When it comes, it will be a new addition to my happineſs.

Writing, my Dear, is one of the moſt uſeful arts that ever was invented. Were it not for this art, the knowledge of every perſon would be confined within the narrow circle of his own experience and obſervation; but by means of this, we can enjoy the

knowledge and diſcoveries of all thoſe who have lived before us, and, in ſome meaſure, make them our own. By means of this art, you may converſe with your friend, though removed to the moſt diſtant corner of the world, almoſt as well as if perſonally preſent. By means of this art, you will be enabled to correſpond with me, and to inform me of all your wants and deſires; whereas you are now obliged to employ Mrs. Bromley, to whom, perhaps, you do not chuſe to open your mind ſo freely as to me. By means of this art you can preſerve on paper whatever you read, hear, or ſee, that is worth remembering; and which it would otherwiſe be impoſſible to treaſure up in your memory.

But it is not only an uſeful, it is likewiſe a polite qualification; nor ſhould any one pretend to the character of an *accompliſhed woman*, who cannot write a diſtinct and legible hand. Let me, therefore, adviſe you, my dear Sophy, to be remarkably careful and diligent in learning the art of writing. Follow the directions of your maſter, who, I preſume, will lay before you the moſt perfect copies and examples. Of all the various hands, a round hand is, in my opinion, the moſt proper; for when you are a miſtreſs of that, you may, with great eaſe, learn either a neat running, or Italian hand; but if you begin with the latter, you never can arrive

at

at any degree of perfection in the former. When you write never be in a hurry, but proceed with the greateſt care and deliberation: always write as well as you can, and then your hand will be ſtill improving; for if you do not, inſtead of improving, it will, every day, become worſe. I have ſent you Newbery's dictionary, to aſſiſt you in ſpelling: for, before you put pen to paper, you muſt reſolve not to indulge yourſelf in the wrong ſpelling of a ſingle word: and if you faithfully obſerve this rule for a ſhort time, you will ſoon be able to ſpell any word without the help of a dictionary. Nothing, indeeed, is more unworthy the character of a gentlewoman, than falſe ſpelling: and yet, in this reſpect, I am ſorry to ſay it, moſt of our ſex are ſhamefully guilty; and ſome of them too, whom I know to be perſons of excellent good ſenſe and diſtinguiſhed abilities: but this muſt have been owing to bad habits contracted in their youth, of which they were never, afterwards, able to get the better. It is therefore your part to prevent, what it is ſo extremely difficult to correct. Farewell, my dear Sophy, and be aſſured that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER IV.

From SOPHIA to her mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Have all your letters lying by me: I read them carefully every morning. I am obliged to you for the good advice you give me; and I will endeavour to follow it. I am not able to tell you, Mamma, how I was affected, when I read the love and affection you expreſs for me: all I can ſay is, that I wept for joy. God grant I may prove as good a woman as you wiſh me to be! it ſhall always be my endeavour to become ſuch. I live very happily: my ſchool-fellows are very fond of me, and Mrs. Bromley is very kind and careful. I am learning Engliſh, ſewing, writing, cypher-ing and dancing: and Mrs. Bromley ſays I ſhall ſoon begin to learn French.

I would have written to you before now; but, you know, you forbade me, at parting, to ſend you any letters, till I could write a pretty good hand. I am afraid you will think it ſtill very indifferent; but I have written as well as I could, and, I hope, I ſhall improve daily. I have followed your directions in ſpelling; for I have ſcarce written

written one word without looking for it in the dictionary, which you ſent me, and for which I am obliged to you: but if I have made any miſtakes, you will be ſo good as to let me know in your next letter. Pleaſe to offer my duty to my Papa, and my kind love to my brothers and ſiſters. I am, my dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER V.

From PORTIA to her daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHIA,

I Received your letter ſome weeks ago. You know I love you, and therefore I need not, indeed I cannot tell you, how much pleaſure it gave me. I am glad to hear, that you live on ſuch good terms with your governeſs and ſchool-fellows; and, you may be aſſured, you will always continue to do ſo, if you follow the directions I gave you in my firſt letter. You have been remarkably careful in ſpelling; for I do not obſerve a ſingle inſtance of falſe ſpelling thro' the whole of your letter. You

are more improved in your writing than I could have expected: and I hope you will be as diligent in the other parts of your education; particularly in cyphering, which you write me you are now learning.

Of all the various qualifications of an accompliſhed woman, there is not any one more uſeful and neceſſary than cyphering. Without this, you muſt depend upon your memory for every farthing of money that paſſes through your hands. Without this, you can neither keep an account of the money you receive from me, nor of what you expend yourſelf. Without this, you will be in danger of being cheated by every perſon you deal with. Without this, you will not be able to aſſiſt me in the management of our family, which, however, I expect you ſhould be in a few years; and ſtill leſs will you be able to ſuperintend the œconomy of your own, when, in the courſe of Providence, you come to be miſtreſs of one. In a word, without this, you will be altogether unqualified for ſeveral of the moſt important duties in life.

Let me, therefore, perſuade you, my dear Sophy, to give particular attention to your cyphering, and to acquire ſuch a competent knowledge in this uſeful art, as is proper for a woman. I ſay a woman; for it is not neceſſary that ſhe ſhould underſtand it

ſo

ſo perfectly as a man: as her ſphere of action is more confined, ſo her knowledge, in this reſpect, ſhould be more confined likewiſe. You ought, however, I think, to be a complete miſtreſs of the four ſimple rules of arethmetic, the rule of proportion, and a plain method of book-keeping, together with ſome knowledge of fractions vulgar and decimal; which laſt will be of great uſe in rendering your accompts more ſhort and expeditious. And I would adviſe you to begin to keep a diſtinct accompt of all the money you receive or lay out, and, indeed, of ever thing belonging to you that can be numbered; as ſoon, I mean, as you have acquired a knowledge of cyphering ſufficient for this purpoſe. By this means you will, at once, impreſs the rules of arithmetic more deeply in your memory, and inſenſibly acquire ſuch a habit of accuracy and regularity, as will be of great ſervice to you in your future conduct. At preſent I have nothing farther to add, but to recommend you to the care and protection of Almighty God. I am, my dear Sophy,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

My dear SOPHY,

BY a letter I lately received from Mrs. Bromley, I had the pleaſure of hearing of your welfare, and of the great improvement you make in dancing. This is one of the moſt genteel and polite accompliſhments which a young lady can poſſeſs. It will give a natural, eaſy, and graceful air to all the motions of your body, and enable you to behave in company with a modeſt aſſurance and addreſs. Beſides, it is an art, in which you will frequently be obliged to ſhew your ſkill, in the faſhionable balls and aſſemblies, to which your birth and connections will intitle you to be introduced; and to appear ignorant or aukward on theſe occaſions, could not fail to put you to the bluſh. It will likewiſe contribute greatly to your health, as it is a kind of exerciſe which you may take when the badneſs of the weather, or other circumſtances, hinder you from going abroad.

I therefore expect, my dear Sophy, that you will apply to your dancing with great care and diligence; and, indeed, it will require your greateſt care and diligence to render yourſelf a complete miſtreſs of this art. Dancing is not ſuch a trifling and in-

ſigni-

ſignificant qualification, nor yet ſo eaſy to be acquired, as many people imagine. It does not conſiſt merely in the management of the heels, as it is uſually termed: no; it comprehends every motion, every geſture, every attitude of the body; and ſhe who cannot walk, or ſtand, or even ſit in a genteel, graceful manner, does not deſerve the name of a good dancer. There is lady Waddlepace, who pretends to underſtand all the different figures in dancing, and poſſibly ſhe does ſo; but ſtill ſhe has ſuch a hobbling and aukward gait, as plainly ſhews that ſhe has no conception of what is meant by elegant and graceful motion: whilſt her daughter, when ſhe ſtands or ſits, does not know how to hold her head, her hands, or any other part of her body, but appears as unmeaning as a lifeleſs ſtatue.

But do not miſtake me: though I caution you againſt an aukward and ſlovenly manner, I do not mean that you ſhould run into the oppoſite extreme of a preciſe and affected one, nor acquire a flighty and jaunty air, which are no leſs ridiculous. Lady Muſgrave is ſo ſtiff and conſtrained, that you would almoſt take her for a living machine; and miſs Bobbadil's gait is ſo extremely ſprightly and ſpirited, that, whenever ſhe begins to walk, you would imagine ſhe is

going

going to dance. All theſe, my dear, are faults, which you ought carefully to avoid. Imitate your governeſs, who has as polite and genteel a manner as any woman I ever ſaw; and you will inſenſibly acquire the ſame eaſy and graceful carriage. At preſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER VII.

My dear SOPHY,

LAST week, I received a letter from Mrs. Bromley, giving me an account of your health, and the great progreſs you make in all the different parts of your education, eſpecially in *drawing*, for which, ſhe ſays, you diſcover a particular taſte. The pleaſure this gave me, is more eaſily felt than expreſſed. Every ſtep you advance in your learning is a new addition to my happineſs. Your education has opened to me a freſh ſource of pleaſure, to which I was formerly an intire ſtranger. Go on, my dear Sophy, thus to render me the happieſt of mothers, by making yourſelf an ac-

accompliſhed woman: and no young lady deſerves this honourable character without a competent knowledge in the art of drawing. Were it only to be conſidered as an innocent amuſement; yet, even in this light, would it merit your attention: for innocent amuſements are of more importance to our happineſs, and perhaps to our virtue too, than many people imagine. The moſt active and buſy ſtations of life have ſtill ſome intervals of reſt, ſome hours of leiſure. The body as well as the mind requires it. And, if theſe are not employed in innocent amuſements, they will either lie heavy on our hands, and, inſtead of raiſing, depreſs our ſpirits; or, what is worſe, tempt us, *to kill the time*, as it is called, by ſuch amuſements as are far from being innocent.

But, my dear, drawing is not only an innocent amuſement: it is more; it is an uſeful qualification. It will exerciſe, delight and improve your imagination, by filling it with the images of every thing that is beautiful or curious, in the works of art or nature. It will ſtrengthen and correct your judgment, by obliging you to examine the objects you copy, with greater care and accuracy than you would otherwiſe have done, and it may ſometimes be an aſſiſtance to your memory, as it will enable you to take down on paper a greater variety of objects,

or circumſtances of the ſame object, than it would be eaſy, or, perhaps, poſſible to remember. It will likewiſe be of great uſe in furniſhing you with beautiful patterns and deſigns for ſewing, which thoſe who are ignorant of this art muſt borrow from others, without being able to judge whether they are good or bad.

But I have neither time nor inclination to enumerate all the advantages, which a young lady may derive from the art of drawing. What I have ſaid, however, will, I hope, be ſufficient to kindle in you a deſire of acquiring an accompliſhment, at once ſo uſeful and genteel. I have an entire confidence in the abilities of your inſtructor, as I know he is a perfect maſter of the art of drawing; and therefore I will not pretend to give you any particular directions. Allow me only to give you one general advice, which is this: let the objects from which you copy, be chiefly the works of nature; or, at leaſt, ſuch works of art, as are faithful imitations of nature; and carefully avoid every thing that is unnatural, whimſical, or romantic, as moſt Chineſe-drawings are. To imitate the former, has a natural tendency to improve the taſte: to copy the latter, has as natural a tendency to corrupt and pervert it. Farewell, my dear Sophy, May God Almighty bleſs you! and be aſ-

ſured,

ſured, that your happineſs is dearer to me than my own. I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER VIII.

My dear SOPHY,

MRS. Bromley writes me, that you are become a great proficient both in vocal and inſtrumental muſic. This, though not the moſt uſeful, is certainly one of the moſt genteel qualifications, which a young lady can poſſeſs. It is, of all others, the moſt agreeable amuſement, the moſt pleaſant recreation; and ſhe that underſtands muſic, need never complain, that her time lies heavy on her hand. It is, at once, the beſt preventive, and the moſt effectual cure for melancholy and low ſpirits; as it can baniſh every gloomy and deſponding thought, and inſpire us with chearfulneſs and good humour.

The power of muſic over the human mind is very ſurpriſing, and almoſt irreſiſtible. When we are depreſſed with ſorrow and grief, it can cheer and enliven our droop-

drooping ſpirits. When we are elated with exceſſive and immoderate joy (for joy may be immoderate and even dangerous), it can allay the violence of the paſſion, bring us down from the giddy height, and reduce us to a ſtate of pleaſing tranquility. If inflamed with anger, or boiling with rage, it can ſoften and melt us into pity and compaſſion. In a word, hatred, malice, envy, and every other vicious paſſion may, by the power of muſic, be preſently baniſhed, or at leaſt, charmed and allayed for a while; and, if the charm be frequently repeated, they may at laſt be overcome.

Theſe, my dear, are a few of the many advantages which may be derived from muſic. But all this is only meant with regard to thoſe who have a *taſte* for muſic, or, as it is commonly called, a *good ear*; for there are ſome people ſo utterly devoid of this *taſte*, that they can make no other diſtinction of ſounds, than that of more or leſs loud. To them, the noiſe of a blackſmith's hammer, and the fineſt airs of the violin, are the ſame. Of this claſs is lady Betty Dudley, who though ſhe comes to the Opera, becauſe it is the faſhion, yet confeſſes ſhe receives no more pleaſure from the fineſt concert of muſic, than from the rattling of her coach; whilſt a perſon of a good ear, improved by practice, receives from

from ſuch an entertainment the moſt exquiſite and refined pleaſure; perhaps the moſt refined that can be enjoyed in this world, except that of doing a good action.

A great deal more, my dear, might be added in praiſe of muſic; but that would be needleſs, as I am writing to one, who, of her own accord, is ſufficiently fond of it. As moſt young ladies are taught to play on the harpſichord and guitar, I expect you will learn to perform on both theſe inſtruments, eſpecially the firſt. But ſtill I would have you to apply your chief attention to vocal muſic, becauſe, in its perfection, it is of a far more excellent nature than that which is merely inſtrumental; the merit of the latter being always determined by its approach to the former. A fine finger is much more eſteemed than a ſkilful organiſt. At the ſame time that ſhe affords greater pleaſure to her hearers, ſhe reflects greater honour upon herſelf. The accompliſhment is more perſonal.

After all, my dear Sophy, I do not mean that you ſhould apply to your muſic ſo as to neglect the other parts of your educa tion; nor do I expect that you ſhould arrive at the higheſt degree of perfection in this, or in any other accompliſhment. It is no ſhame for a young lady to be out-done in voice

voice or judgment by an opera-ſinger; or in dancing, by one who performs upon the ſtage; nor indeed, in any other art, by one who is a complete maſter of it; who has employed the greateſt part, if not the whole, of his time, in learning it; and gets his livelihood by practiſing and teaching it. Perhaps, on the contrary, it would be a ſhame for her to be equal to any one of theſe in their reſpective arts; becauſe, in that caſe, ſhe muſt be ſuppoſed to have employed more time in it, than is conſiſtent with her learning all the other parts of a *complete education*. The buſineſs of a young lady is to acquire ſuch a competent knowledge of all theſe polite accompliſhments, as to be able, upon occaſion, to perform decently herſelf, and to judge with diſcernment of the performances of others. She who is a mere ſinger, a mere dancer, a mere drawer, or indeed, a mere any thing, has no title to the character of an accompliſhed woman. That is compoſed of a competent knowledge of theſe and every other polite accompliſhment, heightened and improved by company and converſation.

I have a great many other things to ſay to you; but, as my letter is already too long, I muſt reſerve them for another occaſion. Your Papa, your brothers and ſiſ-

ſters,

ters, join me in wiſhing you all manner of happineſs. I am, my dear Sophy,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER IX.

From SOPHIA to her mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

IT is now more than a month, I think, ſince I received your laſt letter. I am glad that Mrs. Bromley gives you ſo favourable an account of the progreſs I make in muſic; perhaps it is more than I deſerve. I can only ſay, that I ſhall do all that lies in my power to learn this, and every other thing you deſire me. I am greatly obliged to you for the good advice and directions you have given me, in your ſeveral letters: it ſhall always be my conſtant endeavour to obſerve them. As you are pleaſed to ſay, that nothing gives you greater pleaſure, than to hear of my improvement; ſo, you may be aſſured, nothing gives me ſo great pleaſure, as to receive your approbation. For, tho' I am ſenſible of the uſefulneſs and importance of all the different accompliſh-

ments,

ments, which you recommend to me; yet if I know my own heart, I think it is rather from a proſpect of making you happy, than from any regard to my own intereſt, that I apply to my learning with ſo much pleaſure and diligence. How happy am I in having a mother, who places her chief delight in the welfare of her children! God grant I may never render myſelf unworthy of ſo good a parent! I hope I never ſhall.

I have been learning French for a conſiderable time paſt, and my maſter ſeems to be very well ſatisfied with my progreſs. He has lately put into my hands Gil Blas and the Diable Boiteux, both which, I think, are highly entertaining and improving. Be ſo good as to write me your opinion of the matter, and whether you think the advantages I may reap from a knowledge of this language, will be ſufficent to reward the time and labour which are neceſſary to acquire it; for I would not willingly throw away more time upon any part of my education than it really deſerves. Pleaſe to preſent my duty to my Papa, and my love to my ſiſters and brothers. I am, dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER

LETTER X.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

HOW happy did your letter make me! Perhaps I read it with the eyes of a fond parent, but, I thought, I perceived, in it good ſenſe, dutifulneſs, love, gratitude, and every other virtuous affection. What a bleſſing it is to have a good child! Let thoſe declare whom heaven hath ſo highly favoured, or rather let them feel, for it is a heart-felt joy, not to be expreſſed; I am glad to hear, that you are ſo far advanced in learning the French tongue, as it is an accompliſhment which every young lady ought to poſſeſs. It is now become ſo much the language of the faſhionable world, that they who cannot read and write, and even ſpeak it on occaſion, muſt make a very aukward figure in polite company, and be frequently put to the bluſh. Nor is it the faſhionable language in this nation only; it is ſuch likewiſe in almoſt all the nations of the world: ſo that, if you ſhould have occaſion to correſpond with any perſon in foreign countries, who do not underſtand Engliſh, you can do it in French. But what

I conſider as the chief advantage, is, that it will give you acceſs to a variety of French authors, which are not tranſlated into Engliſh, or, at leaſt, not with the true ſpirit of the *originals*. Though the French are certainly inferior to us in the more ſolid and uſeful parts of learning, yet, in others, they ſeem to excel us: particularly in *genteel comedy*; of which Moliere is an undeniable proof: as you will perceive when you are able to judge of the beauties of compoſition; for we have no comic writer who has painted ſuch a variety of characters, or finiſhed particular ones ſo highly.

After all, my dear Sophy, let not your ſtudying the French make you neglect the Engliſh, which is, by far, the moſt excellent language of the two: and, though it were not, ſtill as it is your mother-tongue, it would be a greater ſhame for you to be ignorant of it, than of any foreign language whatever. Could a young lady write French as well as madame de Sevigne herſelf, yet if ſhe could not write good Engliſh, I ſhould think ſhe had employed her time to very little, or, indeed, to very bad purpoſe. I would much rather have you to write good Engliſh and indifferent French, than excellent French and bad Engliſh: though, I imagine, it is very poſſible for you to acquire a perfect knowledge of both languages. I only

only mean, that, in caſe of a competition, you ſhould always give the preference to the Engliſh. At preſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XI.

My dear SOPHY,

I HAD, lately, the pleaſure of hearing from Mrs. Bromley, that you are daily improving in all the different branches of your education, and particularly in geography, which, ſhe ſays, you have been learning for ſome months paſt. This is an accompliſhment equally uſeful and genteel: but in which, I am ſorry to ſay it, moſt of our ſex are ſhamefully deficient; as I could prove by a variety of examples. Your aunt Delaval has frequently aſked me whether Conſtantinople lay in Aſia or Africa, and a thouſand other queſtions no leſs ridiculous. Miſs Fenton, whoſe wit is greater than her knowledge, and her vanity greater than both, is perpetually committing blunders of this kind. Mr. Grenville happened, the other day, to be reading the news-papers to

a large company, and, among other articles, one from Warſaw, giving an account of a certain nobleman, who, for ſome ſlight cauſe, had divorced his lady. He had no ſooner finiſhed, than miſs, with her uſual forwardneſs, obſerved that theſe Spaniards were the worſt huſbands in the world. Some of the company ſmiled, others bluſhed, and the reſt remained demurely grave. Miſs, perceiving her error, was confounded and abaſhed. But the gentleman, out of his great humanity, endeavoured to apologize for her, as well as he could, by adding, that the young lady's remark was very juſt; that though the place mentioned in the newspapers was the chief city of Poland, he believed there was a town of the ſame name ſomewhere in Spain, and it was a very eaſy matter to miſtake the one for the other. Into ſuch ſhameful blunders do young ladies frequently fall, from their ignorance of geography; and to ſuch pitiful ſhifts muſt their friends have recourſe, to ſave them the bluſh of confeſſing their ignorance. But the knowledge of geography will effectually prevent your committing any blunders of this kind, as it will teach you the names of all the principal towns in the world. Nor is this all; it will furher acquaint you with the climate, the ſoil, and produce of all the different parts of the earth; and with the cuſtoms, manners,

manners, government, and religion of the ſeveral inhabitants: by which means, you will be enabled to talk pertinently on moſt ſubjects that occur in converſation.

But there is ſtill a higher part of geography, which, however, I don't think to be above the capacity of a young lady; I mean that which treats of the figure of the earth; of its turning round its own axis (I think they call it) once in twenty-four hours, which occaſions the ſucceſſion of day and night; and round the ſun once in a year, which cauſes the regular changes of the ſeaſons: beſides a variety of other truths, equally curious and entertaining, which will greatly open and enlarge your mind, and free it from a thouſand prejudices, that cloud the minds of the ignorant. What an infinite pleaſure is it for a lady to ſit in her own room, and, by the uſe of the globe or maps, to examine all the various parts of the earth, and to travel, as it were, in the ſpace of a few hours, over the whole world! In a word, the advantages ariſing from the knowledge of geography are many, and almoſt innumerable. Nor is it valuable merely on its own account: it has likewiſe a cloſe connection with, and a great influence on other ſtudies; particularly that of hiſtory, which it is impoſſible thoroughly to underſtand without it, as I ſhall endea-

vour to ſhew you in ſome future letter. Mean while I conclude, by recommending you to the protection of Almighty God, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XII.

My dear SOPHY,

SOME weeks ago, I received a letter from Mrs. Bromley, in which ſhe commends you for the ſweetneſs of your temper and your great improvement in the needle. To ſay that I was glad on this occaſion, is flat and unmeaning: I was over-joyed; I felt an emotion of pleaſure, known only to thoſe who have a daughter whom they love with the ſame warmth of affection. Go on, my dear Sophy, thus to encreaſe the happineſs of your mother, by conſulting your own intereſt: and, indeed, you cannot conſult it more effectually, than by making yourſelf a complete miſtreſs of the needle.

For though there are many other female accompliſhments more ſhowy and ſpecious, yet there is not any one more uſeful, nay, I may venture to ſay, there is none equally ſo. What an infinite number of the female ſex,

and,

and, perhaps, the moſt virtuous part of it too, live by the needle? How greatly does it contribute to render our perſons more decent, more agreeable, and more beautiful? What a ſurpriſing difference is there between the appearance of lady Morton, whom you have often ſeen at church, and Dol Common the cinder-wench? And yet this difference is chiefly owing to dreſs; and dreſs depends chiefly on the needle. Beſides, as you advance, you will have ſuch patterns ſet you for ſewing, as will at once, entertain and improve your fancy; and enable you the better to learn the art of drawing, which is one of the higheſt parts of your education.

After all, my Dear, I do not deſire you to apply to your needle ſo as to hurt your eyes, or weaken your conſtitution: far from it. On the contrary, I would have this, and all your other ſtudies, carried on in a perfect conſiſtency with your health, which is never to be ſacrificed to any conſideration whatever. All I mean is, that you ſhould not neglect this qualification as uſeleſs, nor deſpiſe it as mean, or beneath a gentlewoman. Uſeleſs it cannot be, for there is no ſtation of life in which a woman can be placed, where it is not highly ſerviceable, and, for the moſt part, abſolutely neceſſary. And it is ſo far from being mean and unworthy the character of a gentlewoman, that I

will venture to ſay, there never was an accompliſhed woman without a competent ſkill in this art. Of the truth of this I may, perhaps, endeavour to convince you in ſome other letter. Mean while I conclude, by recommending you to the divine protection, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XIII.

From SOPHIA to her mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Have received ſeveral letters from you of late; and indeed nothing gives me ſo much pleaſure; as they contain an account of your own welfare, and that of the reſt of the family, with the moſt tender expreſſions of love, and the beſt directions for purſuing my ſtudies. How ſhall I ever repay the obligations you are daily laying upon me! I never can; nor do you expect it. The only return, I know, which you deſire, is, that I ſhould, at laſt, become a virtuous and accompliſhed woman; and, if I do not, I muſt certainly be reckoned the moſt inexcuſable creature in the world; as few are bleſt with ſo many advantages. But, I hope,

hope, you ſhall never have reaſon to complain of my negligence: I am ſure you never ſhall, of my want of duty and obedience.

I enjoy a very good ſtate of health, and am as happy as I could wiſh in every reſpect. Mrs. Bromley is very agreeable in her behaviour, and very reaſonable in her commands, except that, I think, ſhe is rather too ſtrict and peremptory with regard to the article of cleanlineſs: for we muſt, every day, appear at dinner, as neat and clean as if we were going to church. Now this conſumes a great deal of time, which, I imagine, might be employed to better purpoſe. Pleaſe to give me your advice on this ſubject in your next letter. I have no more to add, but to offer my duty to my papa and you, and my love to my brothers and ſiſters. I am

Your obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XIV.

From PORTIA to her daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHIA,

YOUR laſt letter, which I received ſome weeks ago, gave me the greateſt pleaſure. You are as much improved in

your writing as I could have wiſhed; and more indeed than I could have expected. Your expreſſions of duty and obedience are extremely agreeable: they, at once, diſcover a good heart and a clear head. Do not make yourſelf uneaſy, my dear, becauſe you can never repay the favours I have done you. I am repaid already. I enjoy as much pleaſure in beſtowing as you can poſſibly do in receiving them; and, if I ſhould have the additional happineſs to ſee you become a polite and virtuous woman, I ſhall be doubly rewarded. To receive favours from a ſtranger, indeed, which we can never return, is always diſagreeable, and ſometimes dangerous. But, with parent and child, the caſe is very different. The connexion between them is ſo cloſe by nature, that all the good offices in the world can hardly make it cloſer. I am glad to hear that you live ſo happily. It is no more than I had reaſon to expect, from the ſweetneſs of your own diſpoſition, and the prudence of your governeſs; and I ſhould be ſorry if you conſidered her orders, with regard to cleanlineſs, as any diminution of your happineſs; for ſhe is certainly in the right.

Cleanlineſs, my dear, is a habit, I had almoſt ſaid a virtue, which you cannot learn too ſoon, nor retain too long, both from a regard to yourſelf, and to the world around you.

you. It will, at once, contribute to the eaſe and health of your body and be the means of introducing you into polite and genteel company; at leaſt, the oppoſite extreme of dirtineſs will certainly deprive you of that advantage; it will either make your company to be ſhun'd; or, if that cannot be done, it will always render your preſence diſagreeable.

But beware my dear, that you don't confound cleanlineſs with finery; nor miſtake the one for the other. They are as diſtinct in their nature as any two things can well be; and, though not inconſiſtent, are frequently found to be ſeparated. A woman may be very neat and clean, in a plain and ſimple dreſs; and ſhe may be very dirty and tawdry, in a fine and coſtly one. There is Miſs Moleſworth: She never wears any thing above a plain ſilk gown; but that, and all the other parts of her dreſs, which are equally ſimple, ſhe puts on and adjuſts with ſuch elegance and propriety, as pleaſes the eye of every one that beholds her: whilſt lady Dormer, on the contrary, tho' dreſt in the richeſt ſatin and brocade, and loaded with a profuſion of jewels and pearls, is, after all, ſo ſlovenly and tawdry, that ſhe may rather be ſaid to carry her cloaths like a porter, than to wear them like a well-dreſt lady.

I, therefore, expect you will obey your governeſs's orders in this, and in every

thing elſe, becauſe I am confident, ſhe will never order you to do any thing but what is juſt and reaſonable. But you ſay, it conſumes a great deal of time: I am perſuaded you will always find as much as you ought to beſtow (in order to be neat) between the time that is uſual for leaving off ſchool, and that of going to dinner. Beſides it will, every day, require leſs, for the more you practiſe it, the eaſier will it become; and a twelvemonth hence, I dare ſay, you will be able to dreſs yourſelf as well in half an hour, as you can do, at preſent, in a whole one. You may likewiſe conſider it as a kind of diverſion or relaxation from more ſerious buſineſs; and diverſions, you know, of one ſort or other, you muſt have. Your papa, your brothers and ſiſters join in love to you. I ever am,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Received your very kind letter, and am greatly obliged to you for your good advice, which I ſhall ever conſider in light of a command. I think myſelf bound in duty to obey all your orders, whether I underſtand

derſtand the reaſonableneſs of them or not; tho' ever ſince I was capable to diſtinguiſh right from wrong, you have always had the good-nature and condeſcenſion to convince me, that whatever you deſired me to do was for my own intereſt and advantage.

There is ſtill another particular, in which I muſt beg your advice? as I am reſolved to do nothing without your permiſſion. What I mean is the choice of my friends: for tho' we are commonly all in the ſame room, yet I have no more than a general acquaintance with any one of my fellow-boarders. I have not contracted a frienſhip and intimacy with any one of them. I might indeed have done it long ago. I have had frequent opportunities. I have been invited, and even importuned to it. But, ſenſible of my own incapacity to judge for myſelf, I have declined all their offers of friendſhip, and ſtill keep myſelf on general terms with them. Some ſay I am ſpiritleſs; ſome call me ſhy; and others think I am proud. But I am the leſs concerned what they either think or ſay, if you approve of my conduct.

I don't chuſe to find fault with the behaviour of any of my companions. They are all as good, perhaps they are better than I am; and, I know, you would condemn any thing that had the leaſt appearance of detraction. But ſtill, I muſt own, there

there are three or four of them, for whom I have a particular eſteem. They are ſo decent and regular in their carriage; ſo open and honeſt in all their actions; and ſo civil and obliging in their manner, that Mrs. Bromley is always pointing them out to the reſt as an example worthy of their imitation. But, even with them, I will not enter into a ſtrict friendſhip, till I receive your advice; which, I hope, you will give me as ſoon as you can. Pleaſe to preſent my duty to my papa, and my love to my brothers and ſiſters. I am,

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XVI.

From PORTIA to her daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

HOW ſhall I expreſs the joy I received from the peruſal of your laſt letter! How happy am I in having a daughter, who, at an age, when moſt young ladies imagine they can think and act for themſelves, is ſo humble and dutiful, as to undertake nothing without the permiſſion and advice of her mother! But can't I conceal my joy within my own breaſt? Or, if it muſt have vent, can't I be ſatisfied with imparting it to others? Why tell it to my daugh-

daughter? Why, my Dear, I tell it to you for two reaſons: both becauſe I like to think of you, and talk to you, and alſo becauſe I am perſuaded it will be an additional motive to your perſevering in the ſame virtuous courſe. For, I believe, you have ſuch a tender regard for my happineſs, that, when once you know how greatly it depends on your good behaviour, you will never leſſen it by a contrary conduct.

And now, after this flow of parental affection, I come to give you my beſt advice with regard to the choice of your friends. This, my dear, is one of the moſt important ſteps in life, and ſhould be conducted with the greateſt prudence; otherwiſe, inſtead of being a ſource of happineſs and pleaſure, as it may and ought to be, it will prove the occaſion of much pain and uneaſineſs.

The firſt thing, then, and indeed the principal thing, to be conſidered, in the choice of your friend, is, that ſhe be entirely free from all manner of vice, and from foibles too, as much as poſſible; for if ſhe is not, you will be in danger of being corrupted by her bad example. We naturally, and, as it were, inſenſibly contract the manners of thoſe with whom we converſe. In a vicious example, eſpecially, there is a kind of contagion, which rages like a plague,

and

and infects all thoſe who are within the reach of its baleful influence. It undermines our virtue imperceptibly. It ſteals upon us unawares, and takes us by ſurprize. There is an old proverb to this purpoſe, which is not the leſs true for being common, viz. "that birds of a feather flock together;" by which I think is generally underſtood, that perſons of the ſame ſentiments and character are apt to aſſociate with one another. But, I apprehend, it will likewiſe bear this conſtruction, which is not ſo commonly attended to, that, let their tempers and diſpoſitions be ever ſo different when they meet, yet, by a long and intimate acquaintance, they will, in the end, become nearly alike.

But, leſt you ſhould not be able to apply general rules to particular caſes, I ſhall point out ſome of the vices and foibles, which you ought chiefly to guard againſt in the choice of a friend. Above all things, then, let her be free from falſehood and deceit, from hypocriſy and diſſimulation. Let her be open, honeſt, and ſincere, in all her actions. Sincerity is the foundation, it is the ſoul of friendſhip, without this it cannot poſſibly exiſt. For how can you cultivate a friendſhip with one who is always endeavouring to deceive you? Upon whom you cannot depend for the truth of any word ſhe ſpeaks, or the ſincerity of any action ſhe performs?

forms? A friendſhip with ſuch a perſon, if indeed there could be any, would be alarmed and diſturbed by perpetual fears and ſuſpicions, wich are utterly inconſiſtent with the nature of this ſacred union.

Flattery is another vice, nearly a-kin to the former, and no leſs an enemy to friendſhip. It conſiſts in praiſing us for accompliſhments which we do not poſſeſs, and in concealing or extenuating the faults of which we are, unhappily guilty. By the former we are puffed up with a ridiculous pride; by the latter we are lulled into a dangerous, and often fatal ſecurity. It is the part of a true friend, on the contrary, to inform us of all our foibles and imperfections, and to give us all the aſſiſtance in her power to correct and amend them. For how elſe can we acquire a thorough knowledge of ourſelves? We may do ſo, indeed, by the malice, I was going to ſay by the kindneſs, of our enemies (for certainly it is an act of kindneſs to acquaint us with our real characters,) but where is the probability of our ever being reformed by their admonitions? They cenſure our faults with ſuch ſeverity and rudeneſs, that, inſtead of being reclaimed, we are only exaſperated. Their reflections, we imagine, proceed from prejudice and ill-nature; and, therefore, we don't believe them to be juſt: or, if we do, perhaps

haps we ſcorn to alter our conduct, at the time, and in the manner in which they propoſe, leſt we ſhould ſeem to be obliged to them for the favour. But a ſincere and ſenſible friend manages the matter with greater lenity and addreſs. She points out and corrects our failings with ſuch humanity, and politeneſs, that we cannot poſſibly take offence. She probes and dreſſes the wound with ſuch a gentle and delicate hand, that we feel no pain in the application of the remedy. We are pleaſed at the ſame time that we are cured.

The vice directly oppoſed to flattery is calumny and detraction. It is, of all others, the moſt odious in its nature, the moſt pernicious in its effects, and the moſt inconſiſtent with friendſhip. A friend! can that honourable name be beſtowed upon one, whoſe whole life is ſpent in the low and dirty arts of ſcandal and defamation? whoſe greateſt pleaſure it is, to blacken and ſully the reputation of every perſon ſhe knows. To contract a friendſhip with one of this temper, would argue the height of folly. You might then expect to have all your foibles and weakneſſes expoſed to the view of the whole world, and your character loaded with a thouſand blemiſhes, from which, perhaps, it is entirely free: like the ſilly clown in the fable, who finding a ſnake

ſnake in the fields, chill'd and benumb'd with cold, put it in his boſom; but no ſooner was it recruited by the genial warmth of his body, than it ſtung him to the quick, and made him pay dear for his ill-judged humanity

Your friend ſhould likewiſe be free from pride, vanity, and ſelf-conceit. For one that is immoderately fond of herſelf, is not likely to be very fond of another; ſhe that has a high opinion of her own accompliſhments, will probably have but a very low opinion of yours. There is nobody, ſhe imagines, ſo virtuous as to deſerve her affection, or ſo ſenſible as to merit her eſteem; and without eſteem and affection there can be no friendſhip.

Let her have nothing aukward, ridiculous, or affected in her manner. If ſhe has, beſides the danger of being infected by her example, you will frequently be put to the bluſh on her account. For one bluſhes for her friend almoſt as naturally as for herſelf

And now, my Dear, having thus mentioned ſome of the principal vices and foibles, from which your friend ought to be free, I ſhould next proceed to conſider thoſe virtues and good qualities, which ſhe ought to poſſeſs: but this ſhall be the ſubject of another letter. In the mean time I conclude,

clude, by recommending you to the divine protection, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XVII.

My dear SOPHY,

AS I would not wish to leave you long undetermined in a matter of so much consequence as the choice of a friend, I have taken the first opportunity, you see, of resuming the subject; and shall now endeavour to point out those virtues and good qualities, which you ought chiefly to regard in her character

First of all then, my dear, let her be one who is dutiful to her parents: for she that is undutiful to her parents, will never be faithful to you. She that is deficient in this most important of all duties, is not likely to be very observant of any other. And, indeed, from a young lady's behaviour in this respect, you may form a pretty just notion of her character in general; for one, that is so ungrateful, so unnatural, as to have thrown off all respect and deference to her parents, may, and, probably, will run into every other kind of vice and wickedness. Such a person, I hope, you will

will never make your friend. With ſuch a one I would not even have you to keep company. If you do, you may be the worſe for it: it is impoſſible you can ever be the better.

Another eſſential ingredient in the character of a true friend, is humanity and good nature; a certain ſweetneſs of diſpoſition and equality of mind, not to be ruffled by every trifling accident, nor ſoured by any misfortune. A perſon, bleſſed with this happy temper, poſſeſſes within herſelf a perpetual fund of chearfulneſs and good humour, and diffuſes joy and gladneſs wherever ſhe comes. Pleaſed with herſelf, ſhe is the more apt to be pleaſed with thoſe around her. Slow to anger, ſhe is not provoked by ſlight offences; and ready to forgive, ſhe never harbours reſentment in her breaſt. As ſhe is happy in her own mind, ſhe delights to communicate happineſs to others; and, therefore, is willing to cultivate a friendſhip with any perſon, that ſeems deſerving of her confidence. And, as ſhe is ſteady and uniform in her conduct, ſhe never forſakes her old friends, unleſs, by their folly or wickedneſs, they have forfeited all claim to any further regard. In a word, without good-nature there can be no ſuch thing as friendſhip. The ill-natured, the peeviſh, and paſſionate, are utterly unqualified

fied for this virtuous intercourſe. A heart over-run with theſe vicious paſſions, is not ſuſceptible of ſuch fine and delicate feelings. Friendſhip is a tender plant; and will not grow in ſuch a coarſe and uncultivated ſoil. A paſſionate perſon, in the violence of her anger, or rather madneſs, will ſay and do a thouſand things, that are entirely inconſiſtent with all the laws of friendſhip; and the misfortune is, that every trifle is ſufficient to rouſe her paſſion. The breaking of a China-diſh, the treading on a lap-dog, any thing will do: the fewel is within her, and the leaſt ſpark will kindle the fire, and blow it up into a flame.

Secreſy, my Dear, is another quality, which your friend ought to poſſeſs. She that cannot keep a ſecret, can never be a true friend. For what is a friend? It is one to whom we can unboſom ourſelves without reſerve; to whom we can impart all our ſecret thoughts, wiſhes and deſigns, without the leaſt fear of being betrayed, or having them expoſed to the view of the world. Secrets are of two ſorts: thoſe which we would not diſcloſe from the motives of ſhame, and thoſe which we would not diſcover from the dictates of prudence. Of the former kind, I am perſuaded, you have none as yet; I hope you never will have any. Of the latter, I ſuppoſe, you have

ſome

ſome already, and the longer you live, you will have the more. But to betray either the one or the other is equally unworthy the character of a friend, and equally injurious to us; and ſhe that has acted ſo baſely once, ſhould never have it in her power to deceive us again.

Beware, then, my dear Sophy, of entering into a friendſhip with any perſon, till you are well informed, whether or not ſhe can keep a ſecret. Does ſhe publiſh her own ſecrets? If ſhe does, be aſſured that ſhe will never keep yours. She who has not ſenſe enough to conſult her own intereſt, is not likely to conſult the intereſt of her friend. Has ſhe ever betrayed the ſecrets of any of her own friends? Intruſt her not with yours; for ſhe that has betrayed one, may betray a thouſand. Still farther: has ſhe ever been known to communicate the ſecrets of one friend to another? If ſhe has, it is a breach of ſecrecy, and a violation of one of the moſt ſacred laws of friendſhip.

This, my Dear, is a nice and delicate point and one in which moſt young people are apt to miſtake. Your friend intruſts you with a ſecret, you, conſidering it as your own, impart it to another, and ſhe to a third, and ſo on, till at laſt it is known over the whole town. And yet the matter has only paſſed among friends; and why may not one friend com-

communicate her ſecrets to another?---Where then lies the fault, and who is the guilty perſon? For a fault there certainly muſt be ſomewhere; ſince what was originally a ſecret, and ought for ever to have remained ſuch; is now become as notorious as if it had been publiſhed in the news-papers.---To ſpeak the truth, my Dear, the fault lies with you---You are the guilty perſon---You conſidered that as your own, which belonged to another.---The ſecret was not yours: it was your friend's, from whom you received it---You was not at liberty to diſcover it to any perſon whatever.---You had no right, ſurely, to impart it to one, who, though, perhaps, your intimate friend, was an utter ſtranger to her.---Nay, what is more, you had no right to communicate it to your mutual friend; to one, who was equally well acquainted with you both. We may ſometimes have very good reaſons for intruſting a ſecret with one friend only. If we chuſe to impart it to more, 'tis well; but let us do it ourſelves. Let no other perſon uſurp that privilege; for ſhe that does ſo, forfeits all title to any future confidence.

By theſe means, my Dear, you may ſoon diſcover whether or not a perſon poſſeſſes the virtue of ſecrecy. But, if you ſhould not have an opportunity of examining her character in this way; if, after all your obſervations

vations and enquiries, you are not yet fully ſatisfied; there is another infallible method, which, however, I would not adviſe you to have recourſe to, without an abſolute neceſſity. 'Tis this; impart to her, as a ſecret, ſomething of ſo little conſequence, that you are perfectly indifferent whether it be diſcovered or not. If ſhe can keep a ſecret, and has, at the ſame time, a regard for you, ſhe will conceal it, tho' perhaps, convinced in her own mind, that the diſcovery of it could be of no prejudice to you or to any body elſe. If ſhe diſcloſe it, you may then conclude, either that ſhe cannot keep a ſecret, or, at leaſt, that ſhe has no eſteem for you. In the former caſe, ſhe cannot be a true friend to any perſon; in the latter, ſhe can never be one to you.

The next thing, my dear Sophy, to be conſidered in the choice of a friend, is, that her ſentiments and diſpoſitions be nearly the ſame with your own: otherwiſe you can never agree. If you are fond of buſineſs, and ſhe of diverſions; if you love to ſtay at home, and ſhe to be always gadding abroad; if you delight in plainneſs and ſimplicity, and ſhe in pomp and ſplendour; if you are pleaſed with ſenſible and ſerious converſation, and ſhe with nothing but fun and frolick; if you are fond of reading, and ſhe of gaming; if you are happy in peace and

quietneſs, and ſhe only in crowds and company. In a word, if you love what ſhe hates, and if ſhe likes what you abhor, there can be no concord and agreement, no ſympathy of temper, no harmony of ſentiment, no mutual happineſs; and, without mutual happineſs, friendſhip cannot exiſt.

After all, my Dear, a perfect ſimilarity of taſte and ſentiment is not to be expected, (our minds being as different as our faces) nor, indeed, could it be obtained, do I think it ought to be deſired. The faireſt characters are ſtained with many ſpots and blemiſhes. The moſt virtuous perſons have many foibles and imperfections hanging about them, which they are not likely ever to correct, by converſing only with thoſe of their own caſt and complexion. Should the grave converſe only with the grave, would they not, ſometimes, be in danger of ſinking into dulneſs; if the gay and ſprightly keep company with none but thoſe of the ſame humour, will they not, frequently, be apt to ſoar into—madneſs? By the ſame practice, the frugal would probably become avaricious, and the generous, prodigal and profuſe. It is therefore, my Dear, an inſtance of the greateſt wiſdom, to cultivate a friendſhip and acquaintance with thoſe, who are poſſeſſed of ſuch virtues and good qualities as are moſt oppoſite to our own

own weakneſſes and foibles. Are we ſubject to melancholy and low ſpirits? let our friend be a perſon of chearfulneſs and good humour. Are we, on the other hand, too much addicted to levity and mirth? let our friend be more ſerious and ſedate. Are we naturally hot and paſſionate? let us chuſe a friend of a cool and calm diſpoſition.

This, I am ſenſible, is not the general practice of the world. Few friendſhips are formed on theſe principles. Moſt people are fond of their own picture. They love the company of perſons of the ſame temper and diſpoſition with themſelves. And doubtleſs they act very wiſely, if to ſpend the time agreeably be the only end of friendſhip; for in ſuch company they are moſt likely to be happy, though even that is not always the caſe. But if, on the contrary, the improvement of our virtues, and the correction of our vices and foibles be, as it moſt certainly is, the only rational end of friendſhip, then they act very unwiſely. For, how can it ever be expected, that we ſhould either improve our virtues, or correct our vices, by the example and converſation of perſons of our own character and complexion? They poſſeſs none of the virtues we wiſh to acquire. They are guilty of the very vices we want to correct. Which, then, of all theſe our friends will take upon her

to be our monitor and reformer? Will a paſſionate perſon, for inſtance, have the aſſurance to declaim againſt anger; and to ſhew the folly, the indecency, the deformity, and the fatal effects of that vice? Will a giddy and thoughtleſs creature be ſo very thoughtleſs indeed, as to ridicule levity and trifling, the two principal ingredients in her own character? Are the proud likely to condemn arrogance? the covetous, avarice? the prodigal, extravagance? In a word, will any perſon condemn thoſe vices or foibles, of which ſhe herſelf is guilty? But perhaps ſhe may. Perhaps ſhe is not conſcious of her being guilty: for moſt people are ſo blinded by ſelf-love, that frequently they don't ſee thoſe ſpots and blemiſhes in their own character, which are viſible to all the world beſides. Suppoſe, then, ſhe does condemn theſe vices, and exhort her friend to the practice of the oppoſite virtues; yet the influence of her bad example will be more than ſufficient to deſtroy all the effects of her good advice.

Let me, therefore, beſeech you, my dear Sophy, by the regard you have for your own happineſs, and, what, I believe, you value no leſs, by the regard you have for mine, to be very cautious and careful in the choice of your friend. As you have a great deal of ſpirit and vivacity, let her be ſomething more

more compoſed and ſedate. As, I know, you are very generous and open-hearted, let her be more frugal and prudent. In a word, let her poſſeſs, as much as poſſible, all thoſe virtues and good qualities, which you are conſcious, that you yourſelf moſt want.

I deſigned, at firſt, to have finiſhed the ſubject in this letter; but I now find I cannot. It has already ſwelled to a greater bulk than I intended: and I would not, willingly, confound your judgment, nor burden your memory, with too many things at once. What further advice I have to give you on this head, you may expect to receive by the next poſt. For, in a matter of ſo great conſequence, I would rather ſay too much than too little. I would rather mention ſome things ſuperfluous, than omit any thing material. The former may be irkſome; but the latter muſt be dangerous. And a wiſe perſon would ſurely ſuffer a little preſent pain, to prevent a laſting miſery. Your Papa, your ſiſters and brothers, join me in wiſhing you all manner of happineſs. I am,

Your's, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XVIII.

My dear SOPHY,

AS the happineſs of our lives depends ſo much on the prudent choice of our friends, and as you are reſolved to take no ſtep in this important affair without the advice and directions of your mother, I now ſit down to continue and finiſh the ſubject, which I have treated pretty largely in my two laſt letters.

Another qualification, then, which you ought chiefly to regard in the character of your friend, is good ſenſe. By this I don't mean the knack of ſaying ſmart and lively things in converſation. This is not good ſenſe; it is wit; two things of a very different nature, and which, tho' not inconſiſtent, are ſeldom united in the ſame perſon. Neither does it conſiſt in a preciſe, grave, and formal deportment. This, indeed, has more the ſhow and appearance of it; but 'tis only the outward ſhow; it is frequently the wiſdom of the body to conceal the weakneſs of the mind. A grave perſon may be ſenſible, and a witty perſon may be ſenſible: but good ſenſe is neither gravity nor wit. It is ſomething entirely diſtinct. It is the art of behaving, on all occaſions, with ſuch decency and prudence, as to obtain the approbation

probation of every candid and impartial judge. I ſay, of every candid and impartrial judge; for it is impoſſible to pleaſe all the world. Moſt people are ſo influenced, in their opinions, by ignorance, ſpleen, malice, envy, and a thouſand other prejudices, that what would pleaſe one, would as certainly diſpleaſe another. Nor, indeed, would there be any merit in pleaſing ſuch people. It is an honour to receive the approbation of the good; it is almoſt a diſgrace to receive the applauſe of the bad; at leaſt when they are very laviſh of their praiſes, we ſhould always ſuſpect that we have done amiſs. I remember a ſtory to this purpoſe, that is told of ſome ancient philoſopher, who, upon hearing the populace, whom he conſidered as very incompetent judges of merit, praiſing and extolling him to the ſkies, turned about with a kind of ſurpriſe, and aſked his friend "what bad action he had done;" imagining it muſt be ſomething very bad indeed, that could extort a ſhout of applauſe from ſuch an ignorant and fooliſh mob.

A ſenſible perſon never ſays an impertinent thing; nor ever does a fooliſh one. She thinks before ſhe ſpeaks. She deliberates before ſhe acts. And ſhe is bleſſed with ſuch a happy and ready faculty of diſtinguiſhing between right and wrong, that ſhe never ſays any thing ſhe would wiſh to have un-

ſaid; ſhe never does any thing ſhe would wiſh to have undone. Such, my Dear, is the character of a ſenſible perſon; or rather ſuch would her character be, were ſhe poſſeſſed of good ſenſe in the higheſt perfection. But this, I doubt, is more than ever fell to the ſhare of any individual of the human kind. The nearer, however, any one approaches to this ſtandard, the more ſenſible is ſhe to be eſteemed: and the farther ſhe deviates from it, the leſs ſenſible muſt ſhe be accounted. Some are bleſſed with a greater, and ſome with a leſs ſhare of this talent; but without a competent ſhare of it, or, at leaſt, with the oppoſite extreme of folly, there can be no ſuch thing as friendſhip. For, what friendſhip can you have with a fool? with one, whoſe mind is a mere blank, poſſeſſed of no ſentiment, no idea, no notion of right or wrong; who is as incapable to diſtinguiſh good from evil, as a blind perſon is to judge of colours, or a deaf one of ſounds. How can ſhe be able to adviſe her friend, who has not ſenſe enough to conduct herſelf? How can you poſſibly improve by the example of one, who has no conſiſtency, no uniformity of character; or rather who has no character at all? who is guided by no principles, but is toſſed about by every whim, humour, or caprice, that happens to ſtrike her diſordered

dered fancy. What virtues can you ever learn from one, who herſelf is poſſeſſed of none? What vice or foible can you ever reform by the converſation of a perſon, whoſe own life is nothing but a confuſed medley of vice, folly, weakneſs and imperfection? In a word, a friendſhip with ſuch a perſon could not poſſibly do you any good, but, very probably, would do you a great deal of harm.

Another circumſtance, my dear Sophy, which you ought to attend to in the choice of your friend, is, that ſhe be ſomething ſuperior to yourſelf in age, learning, knowledge, and experience. All theſe I join together, becauſe, though not inſeparable, they are commonly found to bear a proportion to one another. Without having lived ſome time in the world, we can have no knowledge; and without knowledge, we can have no experience. It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that ſome perſons, bleſſed with a happy genius, and great opportunities of improvement, are more knowing at the age of twelve or fourteen, than others are at twenty. But theſe are rare inſtances, and do not affect the general rule; which is this, that the older any perſon is, ſhe is always to be ſuppoſed to have the more knowledge and experience; taking it for granted, however, that ſhe is endued with a tolerable capacity,

and has had the advantage of a polite education.

Now, my Dear, a friendſhip, with a perſon of this character, with one who is older, and, of conſequence, more knowing than yourſelf, cannot fail to be of great ſervice to you on many occaſions. If ever you ſhould happen to be at a loſs how to behave in any particular circumſtances or ſituation of life; your friend, by her ſuperior knowledge and experience, is capable to adviſe and direct you. If, in the courſe of your ſtudies and education, you ſhould meet with any difficulties above your comprehenſion, with any doubts which retard and interrupt your progreſs; your friend, by her greater learning, can ſoon reſolve your doubts, remove every impediment, and render the way ſmooth and eaſy. In a word, the knowledge, learning, wiſdom, and experience of your friend, will, in effect, become your own; becauſe you may always uſe them with the ſame freedom as if they were your own property. And this, indeed, is one of the chief advantages of friendſhip, that between perſons joined in this ſacred union, all things are common.

But, my Dear, do not miſtake me, I don't mean, that you ought to contract a friendſhip with one much older than yourſelf. This would be impoſſible. A great diſparity

disparity of age is absolutely inconsistent with friendship. Between a person of sixteen and one of sixty, nay, between a person of twenty and one of forty, I don't think it could possibly exist. Their views and sentiments, their manner of living and thinking, their wishes, their hopes, their designs, their every thing is so very different, that they could hardly ever agree in any one particular. Neither do I mean, that you should never admit into your friendship any one, who is inferior to yourself in age or experience. Such a conduct would be equally ungenerous and imprudent: ungenerous, in refusing to those who are younger than yourself, what you expect from those who are older: imprudent, because, were every one to observe this maxim, you yourself could not possibly enjoy any of these advantages: you would have no opportunity of following the advice I now give you; no person superior to you in age, knowledge, and experience, would deign to receive you into her friendship.---All I mean is, that, whilst you are young and unexperienced, whilst you are more fit to receive than to give instruction, you ought to cultivate a friendship with those chiefly, or indeed only who are capable to give it; who, by their example and conversation, can make you both wiser and better. And, when once

you are farther advanced in years; when you have acquired a ſtock of knowledge and experience, ſufficient to aſſiſt and direct others; then you ought by all means to do it: then you are bound, by all the ties of generoſity, humanity, and juſtice, to perform the ſame good offices to the young and ignorant, which you yourſelf have formerly received from thoſe who were ſuperior to you in theſe reſpects.

The laſt advice, my dear Sophy, I ſhall give you with regard to the choice of your friend, is, that ſhe be a perſon nearly equal to yourſelf in rank and ſtation, in family and fortune; neither too much above you, nor too far before you. Without this equality, there may, indeed, be a kind of acquaintance; but there can be no intimacy or familiarity, and, of conſequence, no friendſhip. Each particular ſtation of life has a certain manner of thinking and acting peculiarly adapted to itſelf, and entirely different from every other. Thus, the nobility have one manner, the gentry another, the merchants a third, the tradeſmen a fourth, and the farmers a fifth: beſides a variety of other intermediate ſtations, for which we have no names. And theſe manners are ſo very different, that, ſhould a perſon of the higheſt and one of the loweſt rank happen to meet in a mixed company, they would hardly

hardly underſtand each other, unleſs the converſation turned upon ſuch ſubjects as are underſtood by all the world. But that is not the converſation of friends. Theirs is ſomething more particular, perſonal and intereſting. Their pains and pleaſures, their hopes and fears, their wiſhes and deſires, their deſigns and ſchemes; in a word, whatever concerns their preſent or future happineſs is naturally the ſubject of converſation among friends.

But, my Dear, were it poſſible for you to contract a friendſhip with perſons of too high or too low a ſtation, yet is it a thing, which you ought carefully to avoid; as it might, and very probably would, be attended with many bad conſequences. In the one caſe, you would be in danger of having your head filled with a thouſand notions, which how proper ſoever they may be for a lady of the firſt quality, are altogether inconſiſtent with your rank. What in her would be deemed excuſable, decent, or even praiſeworthy; in you would be condemned as ridiculous, fooliſh, or, perhaps, criminal. When ſhe goes to walk or viſit, ſhe may have a couple of footmen to attend her. She may go to the play, or any other public entertainment, every evening if ſhe pleaſes, or at leaſt as often as ſhe thinks proper. She may throw away eight or ten guineas upon

upon a head-dreſs that happens to hit her fancy. She may ſubſcribe an annual ſum to any charitable inſtitution. For the laſt action all the world would praiſe her, and for the former ones no ſenſible perſon would blame her, as ſhe acts in character, and has a fortune equal to her expences.

But, my Dear, were you to behave in this manner, what a very different opinion, do you imagine, would people entertain of you? Why, ſome would ſuſpect you were abandoned; others would think, you were mad; and all would agree you were fooliſh. Your friends would be ſorry; your enemies rejoice; and to the reſt of the world you would be an object of ridicule and deriſion. Beſides, to cultivate a friendſhip with ſuch as are raiſed above us in rank or fortune, has a natural tendency to inſpire us at once with pride and meanneſs of ſpirit; two vices ſo widely different, that they could hardly be ſuppoſed to reſide in the ſame perſon. Of thoſe who keep company with none but their betters, it is generally, and, I believe, juſtly obſerved, that they treat their ſuperiors with ſervility and flattery, their equals with indifference, and their inferiors with contempt and diſdain. But they are commonly repaid in their own coin: for the conſequence of this behaviour is, that their inferiors hate them, their equals deſpiſe them,

them, and their ſuperiors laugh at them, when their backs are turned. In a word, you may, if you will, be the humble creature, the mean dependant; but you can never be the true, the boſom-friend of a lady of the firſt quality.

Nor would there be leſs danger, my Dear, in the other caſe; I mean, in contracting a friendſhip with a perſon greatly beneath you in family and fortune. Your mind would be debaſed by her low converſation; your pride would be inflamed by her ſervile and cringing behaviour: for ſuch only could you expect from her. As ſhe courts you, not for your perſonal merit, but for your rank, your wealth and intereſt, ſhe would take care never to forfeit your good graces by doing any diſagreeable action, or telling any unpleaſing truth, how much ſoever the doing the one, or telling the other, might be for your real intereſt and advantage. Your faults ſhe would either conceal or extenuate; your virtues ſhe would magnify and exaggerate; nay, perhaps, praiſe you for virtues you never poſſeſſed. She might, indeed, be your flattering ſycophant, but ſhe could not poſſibly be your faithful friend, one of whoſe principal duties it is to inform you of your faults, and to aſſiſt you in correcting them.

But, my Dear, not only is our pride encreaſed

creaſed by cultivating a friendſhip with perſons in low life; what is more, the very act of forming ſuch a friendſhip is a certain proof of our original pride and vanity: for, if we had not been naturally proud, we never would have formed it. This, you will imagine, is a very ſtrange way of thinking. What? can it ever be a ſign of pride and vanity to cultivate a friendſhip with our inferiors? Is it not rather a mark of humility and condeſcenſion? Such, my Dear, will be your opinion; and ſuch, I believe, is the opinion of half the world: but either they or I muſt be miſtaken, or it is a very falſe opinion. For, where is the humility in keeping company with thoſe who are perpetually flattering us? who, we are ſure, will never venture to contradict us, but will commend and applaud every thing we ſay or do, however fooliſh or ridiculous? If this be humility, 'tis a very ſtrange kind of it, and quite above my comprehenſion. The truth is, perſons of this character are, of all others, the moſt proud, vain, and conceited. They don't like the company of their ſuperiors, becauſe they ſcorn to fawn or flatter; they don't like the company of their equals, becauſe they cannot bear contradiction: and, therefore, they fly to the company of their inferiors, where they are free from contradiction, and, inſtead of offering, are ſure

of

of receiving the incenſe of flattery and adulation.

Of this kind of pride, (for, it muſt be confeſſed, it has ſomething very particular in it) lady Lambton is a remarkable inſtance. I went to viſit her a few days ago, and found her ſurrounded with a large company of ladies, who, in every thing but ſenſe, were certainly her inferiors. What the ſubject of converſation was before I entered, I know not; but the uſual compliments were hardly over, when ſhe took occaſion to commend her daughter, who was ſettled at a country boarding-ſchool, for her great improvement in writing; and as a ſpecimen of her abilities, produced a letter ſhe had lately received from her. All the reſt of the company agreed in praiſing it, tho' one half of them had not ſo much as ſeen it:---there was flattery for you with a witneſs. But I, who ſcorn to flatter any one, took the freedom to obſerve, that I thought it was very indifferent, and that my Sophy, tho' younger, could write much better; and as a proof, ſhew'd them a letter of yours, which I happened to have in my pocket. Upon a compariſon, they could not refuſe giving the preference to you, tho' with apparent reluctance. After this, lady Lambton was extremely grave and demure, and the reſt looked very ſilly and fooliſh. In any other company I would not

not have behaved in this manner; it would have been ill-manners; but ſuch a conceited fool, and a parcel of ſuch ſervile flatterers, deſerved no better treatment. Her vanity and their meanneſs of ſpirit were equally the object of contempt and diſdain.

Thus have I finiſhed what I had to ſay on the ſubject of friendſhip. Perhaps I may have omitted ſeveral particulars. Indeed the ſubject is ſo extenſive, that it cannot well be exhauſted. But I hope I have mentioned every thing that is material, and explained all the principal qualifications of a true friend. And now, my Dear, if you can find a perſon, free from all the vices and foibles, and poſſeſſed of all the virtues and good qualities, which I have deſcribed; endeavour, by all means, to contract a friendſhip with her; and, when once you have done ſo, take care never to forfeit ſo great a bleſſing by your fooliſh and imprudent behaviour. For remember, that whatever accompliſhments you expect to find in her, ſhe has a right to expect the ſame in you; and therefore you ought to conſider what I have ſaid, not only as directions for the choice of a friend, but likewiſe as the rule of your own conduct. If you wiſh to have a perſon of merit for your friend, you muſt endeavour to be poſſeſſed of merit yourſelf; for, without this, you can never obtain ſo great

great a happineſs; at leaſt you can never enjoy it long. A perſon of ſenſe and virtue will never enter into a friendſhip with one that is fooliſh or wicked; or, if ſhe happens to do ſo inadvertently, which, however, is not very likely, ſhe will ſoon break it off. Thus a friendſhip with a perſon of merit has a double tendency to improve your mind, both by the influence of her good example, and as it naturally prompts you to acquire thoſe accompliſhments, which may render you worthy of her regard and eſteem.

If, therefore, my Dear, you want any of the virtues, or are guilty of any of the vices, which I have pointed out in this and the foregoing letters, let me adviſe you, as you value your own happineſs, and would wiſh to enjoy the advantage of a virtuous friendſhip, immediately to ſet about the acquiring of the former, and the reforming of the latter; and with this view, propoſe to yourſelf the behaviour of the perſon you either have made or intend to make your friend, as an example of imitation. For 'tis an old and a juſt obſervation, that example has a greater influence upon our minds than precept, eſpecially the example of one whom we eſteem and love. When we learn virtue by precept, we don't know, till we make the experiment, whether it be practicable or not; but, when we learn it from example, we

we are certain that it is practicable, becauſe we ſee it already practiſed. In precept we ſee only, as it were, the ſkeleton of virtue; in example we behold her animated and living. Farewell, my dear Sophy. May God Almighty bleſs you with every comfort of life, and, particularly, with a true friend. I am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XIX.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Have all your letters on the ſubject of friendſhip lying by me, and have read them ſo frequently and ſo carefully, that, I believe, I could almoſt repeat them by heart. I am greatly obliged to you for the good advice and directions you have given me, and will endeavour to conduct myſelf accordingly. I never imagined, that ſo many qualifications were neceſſary to form the character of a true friend; but, upon reflection, I am fully convinced it muſt be ſo, and that every thing you have ſaid is founded in reaſon and good ſenſe.

There

There is one young lady here, and indeed but one, who ſeems to anſwer the character you have drawn. She is, I think, free from all the vices and foibles, and poſſeſſed of all the virtues and good qualities, which you have deſcribed. Beſides, ſhe has always taken a particular pleaſure in my company and converſation, as, indeed, I have ever done the ſame in hers. We have a mutual regard and eſteem for each other, which it ſhall not be my fault, if I do not ſoon improve into a ſettled and confirmed friendſhip. And, what is a very lucky circumſtance, ſhe is to leave the boarding-ſchool, and come to town much about the ſame time with me, which you ſaid would be in a few months. This, however I don't mention from any deſire of changing my ſituation, ſooner than you think proper; but only to ſhe you, that, by this means, I ſhall have it in my power to continue and cultivate that friendſhip in town, which I can only begin here. I have no more to add, but to offer my duty to my Papa and you, and my love to my ſiſters and brothers. I am, dear Mama,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Received your letter laſt week, and am glad to hear, that amongſt twenty or thirty young ladies, (for I don't think your ſchool exceeds that number) you can find even one properly qualified for being your friend. When you come to London, you will not find one in five hundred. But, my Dear, do not miſtake me. I don't mean to reflect upon our own ſex in particular, nor on the world in general; far from it: nor would I have you to be of a jealous, ſuſpicious, and diſtruſtful diſpoſition, which is always a ſign of a weak head or a bad heart. All I mean is, that you will find very few properly qualified for being *your friends in particular*. This requires, beſides ſenſe and virtue, the foundation and ground-work of all friendſhip, a concurrence of ſo many other circumſtances, ſuch as age, fortune, diſpoſition, &c. that 'tis no wonder if a perſon, poſſeſſed of all theſe qualifications, is rarely to be found.

But tho' I would not have you to be jealous and ſuſpicious, yet I would adviſe you to be very cautious and prudent, in the choice of

of your friends, becauſe, when once you have made your choice, it will hardly be in your power to alter it; at leaſt the doing ſo might be attended with many inconveniences. People would be apt to accuſe you either of folly or fickleneſs. For, had not you been fooliſh, you never would have contracted a friendſhip with perſons that did not merit your eſteem; nor, unleſs you were inconſtant, would you ever abandon thoſe who do. It is always much eaſier to prevent an evil, than to cure it.

You can never incur the diſpleaſure of any perſon, at leaſt of any ſenſible perſon, by declining her friendſhip; but, by breaking and diſſolving a friendſhip already formed, you will certainly create to yourſelf a great many enemies. For, every friend, whom you have thus forſaken and abandoned, will probably become your enemy; and, if ſhe is not poſſeſſed of greater lenity and mildneſs of temper, than falls to the ſhare of moſt young ladies, ſhe will revenge the affront, by betraying all your ſecrets. But, though I think it extremely probable, that ſhe will act in this manner, yet I am very far from approving of her conduct; nor would I adviſe you to imitate her example, ſhould you ever have the misfortune to be forſaken by any of your friends. In ſuch a caſe, 'tis beſt to behave with perfect indifference,

indifference, and thereby to ſhew that you are as regardleſs of them as they can poſſibly be of you. But, with reſpect to what ſecrets they may have imparted to you, during the courſe of your friendſhip, let theſe be ſacred and inviolable: theſe are not to be diſcloſed on any account whatever: no, not even tho' they ſhould be ſo baſe and ungenerous as to diſcover yours. If they are guilty of one crime, (and indeed it is one of the worſt of crimes,) that is no reaſon why you ſhould be guilty of another. By this means, you will procure the love and eſteem of every one that knows you, whilſt they incur the hatred of all the world. Your conduct will be praiſed; theirs will be condemned: your friendſhip will be courted; thirs will be ſhunned. In a word, by this ſtrict obſervance of the ſacred laws of friendſhip, and acting agreeably to the precepts of virtue, you will puniſh their perfidy more effectually, than if you had given way to your reſentment, and paid them in their own coin.

With regard to your coming to town, I have ſettled that matter with your aunt Lumley. You are to live in her family, where you will have an opportunity of ſeeing a great deal of company. Perhaps I may not write to you again, till your arrival in London: if I do, it will only be about

bout ſome private affairs. In any event I will expect a letter from you as ſoon as you are thoroughly fixed in your new quarters. Your Papa, your brothers and ſiſters join me in offering our love to you. I am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XXI.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

IN obedience to your commands, I now ſit down to write to you. I have been in town, you know, for ſeveral weeks paſt, and live very happily. My aunt is very kind and civil, and my couſins are very agreeable and obliging. But, Mamma, what an infinite difference is there between this and my former ſituation! ſuch crowds of company, ſuch variety of diverſions, ſuch viſiting, gaming, and I don't know what,---that I almoſt imagine I am entered into another world! And then, Mamma, when we go to viſit on foot (for we ſometimes chuſe to walk both for pleaſure and exerciſe) what multitudes of people in the ſtreets, of all ranks and conditions, from the king to the beg-

gar! and they all ſeem to be equally great, at leaſt in their own opinion: for the ragged cinder-wench will take the wall of the fineſt lady in town. How different is this from the country! There we never paſſed by a farmer's houſe, but the daughters all courteſy'd to us; but it is not ſo here: inſtead of that, we are frequently in danger of being toſſed into the kennel. The ſtreets too have ſuch windings, turnings, and doublings, that it is ſurpriſing how people can find their way: I am ſure, were I left without a guide, I ſhould be more afraid of loſing myſelf in London, than in Papa's wilderneſs. Beſides, the town itſelf muſt certainly be very large; for I have gone with my couſins to all the different parts of it, to view the remarkable places and curioſities; but I never yet ſaw an end of it: one would imagine it had no end at all.

Whether or not I ſhall like this manner of life, I cannot yet tell: for I have not had time to think of it ſeriouſly; my ſpirits have been kept up in ſuch a perpetual hurry and flutter, by the number and novelty of the objects, that ſtrike the eye in every part of this great city. Thus much, however, I plainly perceive already, that I ſhall have greater occaſion for your advice and direction now, than ever I had before. I find I ſhall be leſs able to conduct myſelf in London

don at the age of fifteen, than I was in the country at nine or ten; ſo that, I am afraid, I ſhall be obliged to trouble you with too many letters.

My aunt Lumley, indeed, ſeems to be a lady of ſo much prudence and diſcretion, that, I believe, I might ſafely rely on her judgment in every thing: and, to be ſure, I will never fail to conſult her on all occaſions; and, in moſt matters, will be intirely determined by her advice. But, both for the ſatisfaction of my own mind, and from a ſenſe of duty, I will never venture to do any thing of importance, without firſt hearing your opinion, which I hope you will continue to give me with your uſual kindneſs and condeſcenſion.

In your next I beg you would give me your ſentiments of the rules proper to be obſerved in converſation. My reaſon for aſking this, is, that my aunt will hardly allow any of us young people to open our mouths in company. She ſays we ought to ſit ſilent, and hear; and never ſpeak, except when a queſtion is put to us. Now this is ſo different from our manner in the country, where we uſed to talk and chatter as much as we pleaſed, that I muſt own, it makes me look very ſilly; for, I imagine, it requires ſome art, even to ſit ſilent with a good grace. I have got a great many other

queſtions to aſk you; but with theſe I will not trouble you, till I receive your anſwer to this. Pleaſe to preſent my duty to my Papa, and my love to my brothers and ſiſters. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XXII.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Received yours a few weeks ago, and am extremely glad to hear that you live ſo happily with your aunt and couſins. I dare ſay it will not be their fault, if you don't continue to do ſo, and I hope it will never be yours. I could not help ſmiling at your humorous, or rather natural, deſcription of London; for ſuch as you have deſcribed it, it muſt certainly appear to all young people on their firſt arrival. But the ſenſe of novelty will ſoon wear off: you will behold the different objects with leſs ſurprize every day; till at laſt, when they are become perfectly familiar, you will view them with the ſame indifference, that you uſed to do the trees and fields in the country.

This

This ſurprize, indeed, which ſeizes moſt young people, on their firſt coming to town, has a very fatal effect upon weak minds. It occaſions ſuch a diſſipation of ſpirits as baniſhes all ſerious thought and employment; and, if it is not corrected in time, frequently grows into a confirmed habit of levity and idleneſs. But, I hope this will not be your fate; I am confident it will not; your own good ſenſe will prevent it: or, if that ſhould fail, the admonitions of your aunt, and the example of your couſin Lumley, who is a very prudent young lady, will effectually preſerve you. By theſe two guides, my Dear, namely, the advice of the one, and the example of the other, I would have you to regulate your conduct entirely. If you do, you will be in little danger of committing any great or capital miſtakes. You will be guilty of few errors, of fewer faults, and hardly ever of any crime at all.

What you ſay with regard to its being more difficult to conduct yourſelf in London at the age of fifteen, than it was in the country at nine or ten, is extreinely juſt. In the country, the temptations to vice are ſo few, that unleſs a perſon be naturally of a very bad diſpoſition, ſhe cannot go aſtray from the paths of virtue; but in town, the allurements to vice are ſo many and ſo ſtrong, that, to be able to withſtand them

all, a young lady muſt be endued by nature with a good heart and a clear head; ſhe muſt be aſſiſted and directed by the prudent advice of her elders, and the virtuous example of her equals; and ſhe muſt have the modeſty and good ſenſe to liſten to the former, and to imitate the latter. All theſe advantages, however, you happily enjoy, and, I hope, you will not fail to make a proper uſe of them.

The opinion you entertain of your aunt is extremely well founded. She is certainly a lady of great prudence and diſcretion, and, in every reſpect, as capable to adviſe and direct you, as I can pretend to be. In matters, indeed, relating to the town, ſhe is more ſo, as ſhe is much better acquainted with its preſent cuſtoms and faſhions. But, whenever you chuſe to conſult me about any thing, you may always expect to receive my beſt advice.

As to the rules, my Dear, which ought to be obſerved in converſation, they are many and various. I ſhall endeavour to explain them to you in this and the following letter; for it is a matter of great importance for every young lady, to underſtand them perfectly, and to practiſe them carefully. So much of our time is ſpent in converſation, that ſhe who is either ignorant or negligent of theſe rules, muſt make a very

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aukward and ridiculous figure in company.

But firſt of all, my Dear, let me obſerve, that your aunt has acted very wiſely in enjoining you and your couſins a profound ſilence, except when a queſtion is put to you.——You muſt learn to think, before you preſume to ſpeak: and the beſt, the only way for this, is to ſit ſilent, and to liſten, with attention, to the converſation of thoſe, who are older and wiſer than yourſelf. In the country, indeed, you might chatter and prattle as much as you pleaſed, becauſe there you was in the company of your equals. But now the caſe is altered. You are now admitted into the company of your ſuperiors. Of thoſe, I mean, who are ſuperior to you in age, ſenſe, knowledge, experience, and indeed in every thing, but rank and fortune. It is therefore your duty, my Dear, to ſit mute, and to profit and improve by their wiſe reflections, and judicious remarks. And, when once you are conſiderably improved, when once you have ſtored and furniſhed your mind with a ſufficient ſtock of knowledge, for bearing a part in rational converſation, then, to be ſure, you may ſpeak: then your aunt will not hinder you to talk in company. On the contrary, I know ſhe will invite you to it, and liſten to you with pleaſure.

But this, my Dear, is an honour, to which

you could never attain, were you permitted to ſpeak in company too early: for, by this means you would be cut off from all opportunities of improvement. Perpetually prattling and tattling yourſelf, how could you poſſibly attend to, or profit by, the converſation of others? In a word, were you allowed to talk in company too early, the conſequence would be, that you would never be able to talk in it at all, with any kind of ſenſe or propriety. She that affects to be a woman too ſoon, is likely to continue a child all her life.

Lady Danvers is a ſtriking inſtance of this. By the fooliſh fondneſs of her parents, ſhe was admitted into company at the age of ſeven, and becauſe, forſooth, ſhe ſaid ſome very ſmart things, (ſo her parents imagined, tho' no body elſe could perceive it) ſhe was allowed to talk with all the freedom and aſſurance of one of ſeventeen. But, unhappily, as ſhe could not come up (ſmart as ſhe was) to the rational converſation of the company, they were obliged, in complaiſance, to come down to her low prattle; by which means ſhe continues to prattle to this day. For how could ſhe poſſibly learn to do otherwiſe? Her parents were ſo complaiſant to her, and the company that frequented the houſe, were ſo complaiſant to the parents, that, for ſeveral years, miſs never

ver heard any thing above her own tittle-tattle; and, when afterwards ſhe happened to fall into other companies, leſs polite, or rather more ſenſible, her mind was ſo over-run with ignorance and pride, that ſhe either could not underſtand, or would not attend to the ſubject of converſation. The perſons ſhe choſe for her friends and companions, you may believe, were ſuch as could prattle like herſelf, or perhaps could do nothing but prattle; ſo that their example, inſtead of reclaiming, ſerved only to confirm her in her old habit of trifling and impertinence. Thus in body ſhe is a woman, in ſoul ſhe is a child. To the ſmart and witty ſhe is an object of ridicule and deriſion; becauſe ſhe does not ſeem to be ſenſible of her own weakneſs: to the humane and good natured ſhe is an object of pity and compaſſion, becauſe, had it not been for the fooliſh indulgence of her parents, ſhe might have proved a very accompliſhed woman. Such, my Dear, are the fatal effects of allowing young people to talk in company too early; and from hence, I dare ſay, you will be convinced, that your aunt acts very wiſely in denying you that liberty, at leaſt for ſome time.

After all, I don't mean that you ſhould be kept ſilent too long. This might bring on a habit of diffidence and baſhfulneſs,

which perhaps you would never afterwards be able to correct. But when, in what company, and on what ſubjects, you may begin to talk, your aunt is the proper judge: to her orders you muſt chearfully ſubmit in this and in every thing elſe. The rules neceſſary to be obſerved in polite converſatian, ſhall be explained in my next letter. At preſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XXIII.

My dear SOPHIA,

LAST week I received a letter from your aunt, in which ſhe expreſſes her entire ſatisfaction with every part of your conduct. She ſays you diſcover ſo much modeſty, diſcretion, and good ſenſe, that ſhe intends to let you take a ſhare in the converſation very ſoon. Allow me, therefore, as I promiſed in my laſt, to mention a few rules, by the obſervance of which you cannot fail to render yourſelf an agreeable companion.

Firſt of all, then, my Dear, take care never to interrupt any perſon when ſhe is ſpeaking. This is the height of ill-manners.

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If ſhe talks longer than ſhe ought, and even deſerves to be interrupted, yet be not you the firſt to do it. That will come with a better grace from one of greater age and experience. If ſhe is guilty of one fault, that is no reaſon why you ſhould be guilty of another. If you have a reflection to make upon any thing ſhe has ſaid, you muſt reſerve it till the end of the ſtory; tho' perhaps you may imagine it would have come in with greater propriety in the middle of it. If the remark would have been very pertinent then, it will not be impertinent now; but if it appears to be trifling here, you may be aſſured it would not have been very ſenſible even there. By this means, you will, at once diſcover your prudence and diſcretion, and inſenſibly acquire a habit of retaining and examining your thoughts, before you throw them out in converſation.

I am the more anxious, my Dear, to caution you againſt this practice of interrupting people in the middle of their diſcourſe, becauſe it is an error, which young perſons, from the natural heat of their temper and the vivacity of their ſpirits, are moſt apt to commit. Your friend is telling a ſtory. In conſequence of ſomething ſhe ſays, a good thought ſtrikes your fancy; out it comes, for you can contain yourſelf no longer.—— Your friend is ſtopt.—The reſt of the com-

pany ſmile.—And yet perhaps your remark was very ſmart and witty. But was it really, do you think, or could it poſſibly be, ſo very ſmart and witty, as to apologize for your ill-manners in interrupting your friend? Every ſenſible perſon will tell you that it could not.

There is another fault, my Dear, nearly a-kin to the former, and which you ought to avoid with the ſame care and diligence; and that is, the cuſtom of anticipating any perſon who is ſpeaking, never allowing her to finiſh a ſingle ſentence, but ſupplying the laſt two or three words yourſelf. The only ſhadow of excuſe that can be offered for this practice, is, that it ſhews you are attending to what is ſaid. But, if this be the only proof of your giving attention, it is a very ill-bred one; and perhaps it would be as good manners to give no attention at all. It is, in effect, ſaying to a perſon, that ſhe cannot tell her own ſtory; or, at leaſt, that if you underſtood her meaning, you could expreſs it much better: than which, I don't know if you can offer any one a greater affront. I have ſeen ſome people ſo provoked at this unmannerly treatment, as to ſtop ſhort in the middle of their ſtory; and others, who, though perhaps they were going to uſe the very ſame words with the perſon who prevented them, yet, upon obſerving

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ing their ill-manners, ſcorned to do ſo; but, to mortify their pride, expreſſed themſelves in terms different from what they originally intended. This, indeed, is the gentleſt reproof, that can be given to ſuch perſons; and this reproof, at leaſt, ought always to be given to every one, who is guilty of ſo much rudeneſs and ill-breeding.

Another rule, my Dear, which you ought carefully to obſerve, is, never to take up too much of the converſation yourſelf, and far leſs to engroſs the whole of it. This, even in perſons of the greateſt age, knowledge, and experience, muſt appear ridiculous; but, in one ſo young, ſo ignorant, and ſo unexperienced as you are, it would be condemned as the height of arrogance and preſumption. Indeed, every one ſeems to be entitled to a greater or leſs ſhare of the converſation, in proportion to her years and knowledge: but no perſon, let her years and knowledge be what they will, has a right to the whole of it; nor ſhould any one, however young and ignorant, be entirely excluded. This would deſtroy the very end of converſation, which is mutually to impart and receive knowledge, pleaſure, and improvement. For, what, knowledge or improvement can ſhe poſſibly receive, who is always talking herſelf, and never allows the reſt of the company to open their mouths?

mouths? Or what pleaſure can they enjoy, who are condemned to a profound ſilence, and have their ears perpetually ſtunned with the noiſe of the ſame tongue. If, indeed, they could enjoy any pleaſure in ſuch circumſtances, they muſt be endued with great patience and humility; greater, I am afraid, than fall to the ſhare of any individual of the human kind.

Still, however, it is certain, that young ladies ſhould be more apt to hear than to ſpeak. They are more fit to learn than to teach. It is their buſineſs rather to acquire than communicate knowledge. And, by a young lady's behaviour in this reſpect, you may form a pretty juſt notion of her prudence and diſcretion in general; for the greater ſhare ſhe poſſeſſes of theſe good qualities, the more will ſhe be diſpoſed to liſten, and the leſs forward to talk: but when you obſerve any one more inclined to talk herſelf, than to attend to the diſcourſe of others, you may ſafely conclude, that her ſtock of ſenſe and wiſdom is very ſcanty and ſmall. A young lady's converſation, I think, ſhould chiefly conſiſt in aſking ſome neceſſary queſtions, or making ſome pertinent reflections upon what is ſaid; and ſeldom, if ever, ſhould ſhe venture to introduce any new ſubject of diſcourſe. This will, at once, diſcover her modeſty, the moſt amiable

amiable quality in young people, and be the means of cultivating and improving her mind, much better than it could poſſibly be in any other way. For, of all kinds of knowledge, that which we gain by enquiry is received into the mind with the greateſt pleaſure, and retained with the greateſt care. Having felt the want of it, and being ſenſible of its value and importance, we are not likely ever to let it ſlip out of our memory.

But if, at any time, you ſhould take the liberty of telling a ſtory in company, as doubtleſs you may in a year or two hence, let me adviſe you to obſerve the following rules. Beware of rambling from one ſubject to another, which is always a ſign of a weak and confuſed head. Let your ſtory be ſhort, otherwiſe you will fall into the error I have condemned above. Tell it diſtinctly and accurately, mentioning all the material circumſtances, and none but ſuch as are ſo; and even upon theſe do not dwell too long: if you do, you will be in danger of loſing the thread of your ſtory, and perhaps not be able to finiſh what you had begun. A perſon travelling on the highway may ſafely divert herſelf with a view of all the remarkable by-paths, and even turn aſide into them a little for the ſake of a better proſpect; but if, charmed with the beauty of the landſcape, or forgetful of her intend-

intended journey, ſhe proceed too far, ſhe may bewilder herſelf, and never be able to recover the main road.

Another maxim, my dear Sophy, which you ought to obſerve in converſation, is, never to contradict any one, unleſs it be in your own defence, or that of your abſent friend; and, even then, you may do it in ſuch a manner as to give no offence, at leaſt to any ſenſible perſon. You may obſerve, that you apprehend the lady is miſ-informed, or give ſome other gentle inſinuation, which your own prudence and diſcretion will readily ſuggeſt. But, in matters of indifference, it is better not to contradict any perſon at all: becauſe it might occaſion diſputes; which are very indecent in any company, but moſt of all in the company of ladies. For thoſe who are moſt apt to ſay exceptionable things, are leaſt able to bear contradiction. The ſame weakneſs of mind which leads them to the former, diſqualifies them for the latter. They are ignorant, and therefore they commit errors; they are proud, and therefore they will perſiſt in them. Above all, never contradict any perſon merely for the ſake of contradiction. This would betray a bad heart. It were to take pleaſure in other people's pain; to mortify your companion, without any proſpect of advantage to yourſelf.

Never

Never affect to be ſmart and witty in your reflections. This might create you a great many enemies; but could never procure you one ſingle friend. Nay, perhaps, it might make you loſe thoſe whom you already have: for a profeſſed wit, in her extravagant flights and ſallies, ſpares neither friend nor foe. The giddy and thoughtleſs might admire you; the vicious and wicked would hate and abhor you; and even the good and virtuous would dread and ſhun you: for virtue itſelf is hardly ſecure from the poiſonous darts of malignant wit. If you have a natural fund of wit, conceal it as much as poſſible; or if it muſt ſometimes appear, let it always be ſeaſoned with humanity and good-natute. But if you have no natural turn for it, never affect it. All kinds of affectation are ridiculous; but that of wit is doubly ſo. By endeavouring to make others laugh, you yourſelf will become the object of ridicule and deriſion.

In company, never ſpeak ill of any abſent perſon, whether friend, ſtranger, or enemy. The firſt would be baſe, the ſecond unjuſt, and the laſt low and mean-ſpirited. By ſpeaking ill of your abſent friends, you deſerve to loſe, and certainly would loſe, both them and thoſe who are preſent; for who, in their ſenſes, would cultivate a friendſhip with one guilty of ſuch perfidy and baſeneſs?

neſs? By ſpeaking ill of ſtrangers, you would make all the world your foes; for ſhe who without the leaſt provocation, can aſperſe the character of thoſe, with whom ſhe has little acquaintance and no connection, deſerves to be the object of univerſal hatred and deteſtation. By inveighing againſt your abſent enemies, you would diſcover the moſt contemptible meanneſs of ſpirit and littleneſs of mind; and, if it ſhould come to their ears, might flatter their pride and vanity too much by making them imagine, that they had ruffled your temper more than perhaps they had really done, or at leaſt than you ſhould give them an opportunity of knowing.

I am the more concerned, my Dear, to caution you againſt this vice, becauſe it is generally ſaid to prevail moſt in the company of ladies. I wiſh I could ſay the imputation were unjuſt; I hope it is; but to deny it flatly would be too preſumptuous in me, who, for ſeveral years paſt, have been ſo little converſant in the polite world. For you know, that, of late, I have hardly minded any thing elſe but the affairs of my own family; and, in the management of theſe, I think, my time has been more uſefully and honourably employed, than it could poſſibly have been in any other way.

All I can ſay, is, that, if this abominable practice (for I can call it no better) be general,

general, I have always endeavoured to be an exception to it myſelf. I never did, to the beſt of my knowledge, injure the character of any individual perſon; nay, I have left ſeveral companies, that I might not have my ears offended, nor my mind polluted, with the helliſh ſound of calumny and detraction. You will think, my Dear, that I talk in a very high ſtrain; and ſo I do; but I do it for this reaſon, that I may inſpire you with an utter averſion and abhorrence of this infernal vice.

I don't mention my own conduct, my Dear, from the principle of pride and vanity. My only intention is to propoſe it to you as a pattern of imitation. I hope you will never think it beneath you to imitate the conduct of your mother—Let me not entertain a ſuſpicion ſo unworthy of my dear child.—I know you never will. I am convinced, on the contrary, you will take a pleaſure and a pride in following my advice and example.

Let me therefore adviſe you, my dear Sophy; let me perſuade you, never to ſpeak an ill word of any abſent perſon whatever, nor even to keep company with thoſe who are guilty of this deteſtable crime. If you ſhould happen to hear any expreſſion dropt in company, that ſavours, the leaſt, of calumny and detraction, ſeem at firſt to overlook

look it; but, if the converſation begin to run entirely in this dirty channel, then fly from the company outright—fly from it as you would fly from a plague—for as certainly as the one would infect your body, ſo certainly will the other infect your mind. Still, however, you may leave it in a polite and genteel manner, on the pretence of buſineſs, of ſome other engagement, or the like; for, tho' they hardly deſerve to be treated with ſo much ceremony, you ought always to remember what is due to your own character. Becauſe they are ill-natured, you are not therefore to be ill-bred. Such companies as theſe, my Dear, you are in no danger of ſeeing at your aunt's, nor in the whole circle of her acquaintance. With people of this ſtamp ſhe would diſdain to have any kind of intercourſe or correſpondence. She would ſcorn to pay them any viſits, and ſhe would take care not to receive any from them. Would to God there were no ſuch people in the world! I hope there are few; but ſtill I am afraid, there are ſome; and into their company you may, ſometimes, happen to fall, by mere chance. On all theſe occaſions, let me entreat you to follow the directions I have given above.

Another rule, my dear Sophy, which you ought to obſerve in converſation, is, never to ſay any thing, that may give pain

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or uneaſineſs to any one of the company. By this I don't mean any of the errors, which I have deſcribed and condemned above. All theſe, to be ſure, give pain and uneaſineſs to the perſons that ſuffer by them; but then they do ſo in plain and open terms, and, of conſequence, may be the more eaſily corrected or refuted. What I mean, at preſent, is, that you ought never to ſay any thing, that ſeems to reflect, even in the moſt diſtant manner, upon the faults or foibles of any of the company, or of their abſent friends. If this proceed from malice, it betrays a bad heart; if from want of thought, it diſcovers a weak head: and the ill-natured and fooliſh are equally unqualified for the delicate intercourſe of polite converſation.

The laſt advice, my Dear, which I ſhall give you on this ſubject, is, never to appear to be abſent in company, or inattentive to the perſon who is ſpeaking. This is always a ſign of intolerable pride, or of great weakneſs. Some people are ſo full of themſelves, that they diſdain to liſten to the converſation of others. Their minds are puffed up with ſuch a high opinion of their own good ſenſe, that they think it below them, forſooth, to attend to, what they imagine, the nonſenſe of other people. Such vain and conceited fools ſhould be

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excluded from all companies, condemned to perpetual ſolitude, and obliged to converſe with thoſe only whom they eſteem; that is, with their own dear ſelves. But this abſence of thought, this want of attention, is not always the effect of pride. It is ſometimes owing to the mind's being ſtrongly poſſeſſed with ſome violent paſſion, which ſwallows up, as it were, all the faculties of the ſoul, and renders it inſenſible to every other impreſſion. One in this ſituation ſhall be ſo far from attending to the perſon who is ſpeaking, that, even when ſhe is ſpoke to, ſhe will hardly underſtand you. She ſtarts, like one rouſed out of a dream, and wonders where ſhe is, or what the company have been doing. All that can be ſaid for ſuch people, is, that they are more the objects of pity than contempt. Thy are labouring under a violent diſeaſe of the mind, and ſhould no more venture into company, than if they were in a raging fever. There is another ſource of this habit of inattention: it ſometimes proceeds from a conſtitutional weakneſs, incident to giddy and thoughtleſs minds, which can never fix, for ten minutes, upon the ſame object, but muſt be always fluttering from one trifle to another. A perſon of this character can neither tell a ſtory herſelf, nor attend to one that is told by another.

ther. To confine her attention to the ſame ſubject, or to make her thoughts run in the ſame channel for a quarter of an hour together, would be a kind of impriſonment which ſhe could not bear. All her pleaſure lies in perpetual change and variety, and that ſhe would not forego on any account whatever. Of all theſe different kinds of inattention, the laſt is certainly the moſt excuſable, and perhaps the eaſieſt to be cured; for, being commonly the effect of youth, it will, of conſequence, wear off as the perſon advances in years.

Theſe, my Dear, are ſome of the principal maxims, which you ought carefully to obſerve in company; and if you do, you will be in little danger of committing any great or capital blunders. There are, beſides, ſome other rules of leſs conſequence; but theſe depend ſo much on the different humours and characters of different companies, that they muſt be left entirely to the ſuggeſtions of your own prudence and diſcretion. Pleaſe to make my kind compliments to your aunt and couſins. I ever am

Your's, &c.

PORTIA.

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LETTER XXIV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

BY your laſt letter I am fully convinced of what you told me ſome time ago, that you take as much pleaſure in beſtowing favours upon me, as I can poſſibly do in receiving them; otherwiſe you would never be at ſo much pains, to adviſe and direct me in all the different parts of my conduct. You may be aſſured, I will chearfully follow the good advice and ſenſible inſtructions you have given me with regard to my behaviour in company; and, as my aunt now allows me to take a ſhare in the converſation, I ſhall have an opportunity of putting them in daily practice—The next thing, my dear Mamma, in which I would beg your advice, is, the article of dreſs; for in this, I think, my aunt is rather too ſevere. It is true, ſhe allows us to dreſs in a very genteel and elegant manner, but will not permit us to ſpend ſo much time in it, as I know ſome other young ladies do. My couſins and I have been teaſing her, for ſeveral days paſt, to let us follow a new faſhion, which is juſt come into vogue; but ſhe abſolutely refuſes to give her conſent. She ſays it is as ridiculous to be the firſt in adopting a new faſhion,

fashion, as it is to be the last in laying an old one aside—She is likewise, I think, rather too rigid with regard to our diversions. Indeed, we sometimes go to the play, the opera, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall; but then it is always in the company of an elderly gentlewoman, who sticks as close by us as if we were children, and could not walk by ourselves. But all our importunities have not been able to prevail upon her to let us go to Sadler's-Wells, or Marybone. She says, if ever we go to these places, which she very much doubts, we must have more prudence and discretion, than we yet seem to have: that she would almost be ashamed to accompany us herself; and, where she is ashamed to appear, we ought to be afraid.

As to diversions within doors, we have but few. My aunt does not seem to be so fond of gaming as some other ladies of her acquaintance; and even when there is a party, she seldom admits any of us young people into it; or, if she does, she never allows us, on any account, to play for money. Pray, Mamma, give me your opinion of all these matters in your next. At present I have no more to add, but to entreat you to present my duty to my papa, to accept the same yourself, and to offer my kind love to my sisters and brothers. My aunt and cou-

ſins preſent their compliments to you and the reſt of the family. I ever am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XXV.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Had the pleaſure of yours a few weeks ago. The town, I ſee, has inſpired you with new notions of dreſs and diverſions, to which, whilſt you lived in the country, you was a perfect ſtranger. This, my Dear is no more than I expected. I knew it would be the caſe; but I knew, at the ſame time, that you had too ſtrong a ſenſe of duty and obedience to take any ſtep in theſe matters, without the advice of your mother. This, however, is, in a great meaſure, rendered ſuperfluous by the wiſe conduct of your aunt, who, in this, as in every thing elſe, has acted with the greateſt prudence and diſcretion. Nor do I ſee how you can accuſe her of ſeverity. She allows you, by your own confeſſion, to dreſs as elegantly and

and genteely as you pleaſe. And what more would you have? I hope you would not wiſh to dreſs in a gaudy and indecent manner. I am ſure you do not. You have too much modeſty and good ſenſe to be guilty of an action ſo very fooliſh and imprudent.

I muſt be ſo plain, my Dear, or, if you will, ſo old-faſhioned, as to tell you, that the firſt and original intention of cloaths was to defend the body from cold; and, therefore, nothing can be more unnatural, than to dreſs in ſuch a manner, as to leave the neck and breaſt, the moſt tender and delicate parts of it, expoſed to all the inclemency and ſeverity of the weather. This cuſtom muſt certainly be very pernicious to the health. I verily believe, that nineteen in twenty of the diſeaſes incident to our ſex, are owing to this fooliſh manner of dreſſing.

It is, I think, generally allowed, that moſt of our diſtempers are occaſioned by colds; and what way ſo likely to catch cold as to leave the moſt ſenſible parts of the body almoſt, if not entirely naked? But ſuch is the irreſiſtible power of vanity, that, let the conſequence be what it will, be it colds, diſeaſes, or even death itſelf, giddy and thoughtleſs creatures muſt and will follow the faſhion. What a ridiculous thing it is for a young lady to keep her room for weeks together, in order to get the better

of a cold, and yet the moment ſhe appears in publick again, to run the riſk of catching a new cold, by dreſſing in this careleſs ſhall I call it, or rather indecent manner? Such perſons act literally according to the old proverb, "that it is better to be out of "the world than out of faſhion." Rather than not live according to the preſent mode, they would wiſh not to live at all. They prefer the good opinion of the vain and giddy part of the world to all regards of health, and even of life itſelf.

All that can be ſaid for theſe people, is, that, ſince they will be fooliſh, they muſt e'en reap the fruits of their own folly. Let them, in the name of goodneſs, follow the faſhion; but let them remember, at the ſame time, that, if the faſhion be contrary to reaſon, they muſt of conſequence be ſickly and miſerable; whereas, by following their own judgment, inſtead of the vain opinion of the world, they might at once preſerve their health and happineſs. And which of the two, do you think, acts the wiſer part? ſhe, who, in the midſt of winter, can walk the Mall in all the bloom and beauty of health, tho' a little out of the faſhion? or ſhe, who, from a ſilly attachment to the mode, lies pining and languiſhing on a ſick (if not on a death) bed? The one lives a noble monument of the bleſſed effects

fects of reaſon and wiſdom; the other dies a wretched victim to the power of vanity and faſhion. Theſe two characters are ſo very oppoſite in their nature, and ſo different in their conſequences, that, I dare ſay, the bare mention of them is more than ſufficient to determine your choice.

Nor, my Dear, is this fooliſh cuſtom more deſtructive of health, than it is inconſiſtent with modeſty, which is one of the greateſt ornaments of the female ſex. Dreſs has been frequently, and, I believe, juſtly conſidered as an indication of the inward diſpoſitions of the mind. A modeſt and decent dreſs beſpeaks the wearer to be a perſon of ſenſe and ſobriety. A gaudy and affected one betrays a weak head, or a licentious heart.

I don't ſay, my Dear, that this is an infallible rule of judging. I am ſure it is not; it cannot. But ſtill I believe there is ſomething in it, and I know the generality of mankind are apt to place a great deal in it; ſo very much indeed, that I remember once to have ſeen a young lady of unblemiſhed character miſtaken for a woman of bad fame, for no other reaſon in the world, than becauſe her dreſs was a little too ſhowy and flaunting. One evening, as ſhe was returning from a viſit, a young gentleman walked up to her, and addreſſed her in a very fami-

liar ſtyle; but upon her giving him a rebuff, he begged her ten thouſand pardons, and told her, that, if ſhe would not expoſe herſelf to the like inſults for the future, ſhe muſt never dreſs in that gaudy and indecent manner: and indeed, methinks, no virtuous perſon would chuſe to incur the bare ſuſpicion of immodeſty, for the ſake of any faſhion whatever.

Let me, therefore, adviſe you, my dear Sophy, to take particular care, that your dreſs be always conducive to health, and conſiſtent with modeſty. If it want either of theſe properties, it can never be ſaid to be well choſen: nay, I will venture to affirm it can never be elegant: for, let ſuperficial thinkers ſay what they will, nothing can be elegant that is contrary to reaſon and common ſenſe.

Another end of dreſs ſeems to have been to diſtinguiſh the one ſex from the other; and therefore the more diſtinct their dreſſes are, ſo much the better. The women ſhould no more adopt the habit of the men than the men ſhould adopt the habit of the women. For a lady to aſſume the coat and periwig, the hat and feather, is as ridiculous as for a man to appear in petticoats. And yet, I am ſorry to ſay it, this diſtinction of ſex ſeems to be very little regarded by our modern fine ladies. On meeting a company

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on horſeback now-a-days, one ſhall hardly be able to diſtinguiſh, at firſt ſight, whether it is compoſed of ladies or gentlemen.

I remember a curious ſtory of our coachman John, who, you know, is no fool neither, concerning one of theſe (I don't know well how to call them, I think your papa ſays they ſhould be called) Amazons. A perſon, elegantly dreſt and mounted on a fine horſe, aſked him one day, if ſuch a town, pointing to it, was not Mancheſter; to which he anſwered with a low bow, "Yes, Sir." But, upon a ſecond queſtion, if he knew in what particular ſtreet Mrs. Middleton's boarding-ſchool lay, as ſhe wanted to call upon her huſband's niece, who was ſettled there; John perceiving his error, and obſerving her dreſs more narrowly, replied, with a kind of bluſh and heſitation, "No—M—Madam."

I know theſe female cavaliers alledge, in their own defence, that this maſculine habit is by far the moſt convenient for riding; but ſuppoſe it were ſo, can that be ever allowed to be a ſufficient apology for the indecency of it! A modeſt lady, methinks, would chuſe never to appear on horſeback at all, rather than lay aſide ſuch a material diſtinction of her ſex.

But, my Dear, convenience is not the only motive to this ridiculous cuſtom. There is

another and a ſtronger motive too, though perhaps theſe ladies will be aſhamed to acknowledge it; nor indeed ſhould I take notice of it, were it not that, in laying down rules for the direction of your conduct, I think it my duty to mention every thing, that may tend to your information and inſtruction. They think, by this means, to recommend themſelves more effectually to the love and admiration of the men; in which, (if I may believe your papa and uncle) they are greatly miſtaken. For they tell me, that a man no more likes to ſee a woman ſtrutting in a coat and hat, than a woman would be pleaſed to ſee a man ſwimming along in a gown and capuchin. It is inconſiſtent with that delicacy and ſoftneſs, which is one of the greateſt beauties and ornaments of the female ſex; and which is infinitely more winning and engaging, than all the ſmart and maſculine airs aſſumed by theſe cavalier-like ladies. Let me, therefore, flatter myſelf, my dear Sophy, that you will never give into a practice, at once ſo indecent and unnatural.

Your aunt's obſervation, "that it is as "ridiculous to be the firſt in adopting a "new faſhion, as to be laſt in laying an "old one aſide," is extremely juſt. The former is always a ſign of fickleneſs and vanity: the latter, of pride and ſtiffneſs. Thoſe ladies,

ladies, whom the men commonly diſtinguiſh by the name of coquettes, are moſt apt to fall into the firſt error; and the prudes, as they are uſually called, into the laſt; and a woman of ſenſe would no more chuſe to paſs for the one than the other.

To be extremely fond of inventing and adopting new faſhions, is, in effect, to ſay that all faſhions are indifferent: that they depend entirely upon fancy and humour, and have nothing in them of reaſon or common ſenſe. On the other hand, to be very tenacious of an old faſhion, and to condemn all kind of innovations, is no leſs ridiculous. It is ſaying, in other words, that one faſhion only can be right, and every other muſt be wrong; that it depends entirely upon reaſon, and has nothing to do with fancy and taſte. Both theſe ways of thinking are equally falſe, and the truth lies in the middle between them. Faſhion neither depends upon reaſon entirely, nor upon fancy entirely, but partly upon each.

My deſign in making theſe obſervations, is, to let you ſee, that as no perſon ſhould think ſhe diſcovers great ingenuity in being the inventor of a new faſhion, ſo no lady ſhould imagine ſhe ſhews her good ſenſe in retaining an old one, when it is laid aſide by every body elſe.

Follow the fashion then, my Dear, by all means, in things that are harmless and indifferent. To do otherwise, instead of shewing your good sense, would only discover an obstinacy in trifles, which is always a sure sign of a fool. But never follow it, when it is inconsistent with decency and modesty. Some people, indeed, might call this an easiness of temper, and a due deference to the world; but I must own I should give it a very different and a much worse name; I should not be afraid to call it want of understanding, or even want of virtue.

But, though I think it very proper that you should follow the mode, yet I would still advise you to have some regard, in the choice of your dress, to your stature, shape, features, and complexion: for it is a most foolish conceit to imagine, that the same fashion will suit all complexions equally well. Nature has diversified the human countenance with such an infinite variety, that perhaps there never were any two faces exactly alike; and therefore it should seem to follow, that no two dresses should be exactly alike neither: at least, if they are so, they can never be equally proper. What I mean is, that every young lady, at the same time that she follows the fashion, should study to adapt her dress to the particularities of her shape, features, and complexion. It

is for want of this diſtinction, and from a blind and injudicious attachment to the mode, that ſo many thoughtleſs creatures deſtroy the little beauty nature has given them; and, inſtead of correcting or ſoftening the peculiarities of their countenance, render themſelves perfectly ridiculous by their ſilly and childiſh affectation.

A lady, whoſe face is a little inclined to be long, might look extremely well, would ſhe only be content to remain as nature made her. But a high head-dreſs comes into vogue, and ſhe muſt have one to be ſure, as well as others, and perhaps one of the higheſt too; by which means the natural length of her face, which at firſt was very conſiſtent with beauty, is drawn out to ſuch an immoderate degree, that what was originally no more than a peculiarity, is now converted into downright deformity. And thus too it happens in a thouſand other caſes.

The truth is, the wiſe and the fooliſh equally follow the faſhion; but with this material difference, that the former do it only in as far as it tends to render their perſons more decent, handſome, and beautiful; whereas the latter have little or no regard to theſe conſiderations. They follow it blindly and implicitly, though it ſhould make them more ſhapeleſs, ugly, and de-

formed: they are in the faſhion, and that's enough.

Another advice, my dear Sophy, I would give you, is this, never affect to be at the top of the faſhion. It is owing to this ſilly affectation, that faſhions are ſo fleeting and changeable; for, whilſt every one endeavours to outvie her neighbour, they carry the faſhion to ſuch an extravagant length, that at laſt it becomes perfectly ridiculous: and when they have made it ſo, they naturally run into the oppoſite extreme, where they will not continue long neither; but when they are grown weary of it, they will invent ſome other faſhion, and thus they are perpetually running round in an endleſs circle of folly and trifling.

I have been frequently diverted with your grand mamma's obſervations on the hoop-petticoats. She ſays, when they firſt came into faſhion, they were tolerably decent; but, by the ſilly ambition of the ladies to excel one another, they at laſt ſwelled to ſuch an immoderate ſize, that ſhe has ſeen many a little diminutive creature, incloſed in one of theſe huge circles, much broader than ſhe was long.

But, I think, you have another cauſe of complaint. Your aunt, you ſay, will not allow you time enough to dreſs, at leaſt not ſo much as ſome young ladies of your acquaintance

quaintance have. You remember, my Dear, when you lived in the country, you complained, that Mrs. Bromley obliged you to conſume too much time in dreſſing; and now your aunt gives you too little; and yet, I dare ſay, ſhe allows you double of what you then had: can any thing be more contradictory and inconſiſtent? But, my Dear, I blame you not: it is the weakneſs of human nature: for we are ſuch changeable and inconſiſtent creatures, that no two perſons can differ more widely from each other in their ſentiments and manner of thinking, than the ſame perſon does from herſelf in the ſeveral ſtages of her life.

It is impoſſible, my Dear, to determine exactly how much time is ſufficient for dreſſing: ſometimes you may require more, ſometimes leſs, juſt as you may want to dreſs with greater or leſs elegance; and ſome ladies will dreſs as well in one hour, as others can do in half a dozen. The truth is, a perſon of good ſenſe, and fine taſte will always dreſs more neatly and quickly, than ſhe who is poſſeſſed of neither of theſe qualities. The former ſees at once what is proper, elegant, and graceful. The latter has no notion of neatneſs, elegance, and propriety. She is therefore perpetually ſhifting and changing without ever coming to any fixt reſolution; and after two or three hours hard labour, ſhe

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is, at laſt, thoroughly diſſatisfied with herſelf and her woman, and perhaps farther from her purpoſe than when ſhe began. As, therefore, you would wiſh to be eſteemed a lady of ſenſe and taſte, you muſt learn to dreſs with quickneſs and diſpatch.

Beſides, what a ridiculous thing is it for any one to ſpend ſome four or five hours every day in decking and adorning her body, whilſt perhaps ſhe does not employ one tenth part of that time in improving and embelliſhing her mind. This is behaving as if ſhe were all body, and had no mind to care for: or, as if it had been given her for no other purpoſe than to contrive ornaments and decorations for her perſon: a ſuppoſition ſo unworthy of the Author of our being, and the dignity of our own nature, that it can never enter into the head of any ſenſible perſon. And yet, if ſhe goes on at this rate, it will ſoon be ſo depraved and corrupted as to be good for little elſe, and hardly even for that. It will be ſo over-run with ignorance, prejudice, and error, as to be utterly unfit for any rational exerciſe or employment. In a word, the mind is our better, it is our principal part, and therefore it demands and deſerves our principal care and concern. The body is not to be neglected; by no means: but it is not to take up the greateſt part of our time, and far leſs to engroſs the

the whole of it. In my next I ſhall give you my opinion of diverſions and gaming. At preſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your's, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XXVI.

My dear SOPHY,

AS I promiſed in my laſt, I now ſit down to give you my opinion of public diverſions and gaming. By your own confeſſion, your aunt allows you to go to the opera, the play, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall: and what more would you have? to what other diverſions would you go? to Sadler's-Wells and Marybone, &c.? Think with yourſelf, my Dear, would you really go to theſe places if you were permitted? I dare ſay you would not: your own good ſenſe would not allow you.

The entertainments at Sadler's-Wells conſiſt chiefly in exhibiting ſome odd feats of bodily agility, which may ſerve extremely well to gratify the gaping curioſity of thoſe who like to gaze and ſtare at ſtrange ſights,

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but can never afford any rational amuſement to people of ſenſe; and the muſic there, as well as at Marybone, is ſo much inferior to what you hear at the public places you are allowed to frequent, that you can never have the leaſt inducement to go on that account.

But I had almoſt forgot that you have another ſubject of complaint. You and your young couſins, you ſay, are always attended by an elderly gentlewoman to all the public diverſions. And where is the harm of this, pray? Does this ſame elderly gentlewoman hinder you to enjoy the pleaſures of the entertainment? Does ſhe ſhut your eyes at the play, or ſtop your ears at the opera? Does ſhe make the company at Ranelagh appear leſs ſplendid and brilliant, or the gardens at Vauxhall leſs pleaſing and agreeable? You'll ſmile, my Dear, at the oddity of theſe queſtions, and yet you talk as if ſhe really did ſo. Where then is the inconvenience of having this prudent lady to walk along with you, and to entertain you with her ſenſible converſation?

But, you think, it is treating you like a child. And what then? Sure you cannot imagine that you are already a woman. Don't affect to be one too ſoon.—But to be plain, my Dear, this gentlewoman is intend-

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ed at once to be your companion, your guide and guardian; to improve you by her ſenſible diſcourſe and remarks, to teach you a proper and becoming behaviour, and to protect you from all danger. For, whatever you may think, there is more danger even in theſe public places than you are aware of, and your aunt has certainly taken the beſt method to ſecure you againſt it.

Suppoſe now, that you and your couſins were allowed to go to Vauxhall by yourſelves. Three or four very young ladies, and nobody to attend them! neither father, nor mother, nor uncle, nor aunt, nor brother, nor any one elſe! What do you think would be the conſequence? Why ſome pert, forward, impudent young fellow comes up to you, and, by his gentle and artful addreſs, inſinuates himſelf into your company and converſation; and perhaps you are very well pleaſed with his politeneſs, and take a turn with him round the garden. Now, my Dear, ſuppoſe the danger goes no farther, as I hope it does not; yet do you know who this ſame young ſpark is? why, poſſibly one of the moſt notorious and abandoned rakes about town; and by having been in his company for half an hour, you may have brought ſuch a ſlur upon your reputation, as will be very difficult for you to wipe off. You ſee, my Dear,

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the hazard you have run; tremble at the imaginary danger: learn to diſtruſt your own ſtrength, and depend entirely on the wiſer counſel and direction of your aunt.

Of all theſe entertainments the repreſentation of a good play is certainly the moſt rational and inſtructive. The ſtage would be an excellent ſchool of morality, were it under proper regulations, which I am afraid, it is not; for I am told there are ſuch pieces acted there ſometimes, as a modeſt lady would be aſhamed to be ſeen at. In this particular you muſt conduct yourſelf by the advice of your aunt, who as ſhe will never permit you to go to a bad play, ſo I am certain will never hinder you to go to a good one, at proper ſeaſons.

There is only one advice, my Dear, I would give you with regard to your behaviour at plays, which is this: let your eyes and attention be fixt rather on the actors than the company: allow your affections to be carried along with the ſtream of the play; never ſmile at a mournful ſcene, nor appear grave and demure at a chearful one. Both theſe manners are equally ridiculous and unnatural; they betray either an unfeeling heart, or a weak, giddy, and fantaſtical head; they plainly ſhew that you don't underſtand the ſubject of the play, or that you don't attend to it; or, what is

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worſt of all, that your heart is not ſuſceptible of fine and delicate ſentiments.

But, my Dear, with regard to diverſions in general, I would have you to remember, that they are to be conſidered merely as diverſions, and not as ſerious buſineſs. They are intended not to diſſipate and unſettle the mind, but only to relax and unbend it, that it may return to the performance of the important duties of life with greater alacrity and vigor: and therefore you ought never to allow them to take up too much of your time, and far leſs to engroſs the whole of it, as is the practice, I'm afraid, of too many young ladies. What with auctions in the forenoon, viſiting in the afternoon, and plays, operas, Ranelagh, Vauxhall, &c. in the evening, I doubt they find but little time for more uſeful employments. This might do extemely well, had we been ſent into the world only to divert ourſelves for a while with bawbles and gew-gaws like children; but that would be a ſuppoſition equally unworthy of our great Creator, and the dignity of our own nature: on the contrary we were placed here to contribute to the happineſs and welfare of our fellow-creatures, and to improve our own minds in knowledge, virtue, and piety, in order to qualify us for a better and happier ſtate hereafter,

after, as I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you in ſome future letter.

Let me therefore adviſe you, my Dear Sophy, never to have recourſe to diverſions, till once you are wearied and fatigued with buſineſs. By this means you will enjoy them with double pleaſure; whereas, ſhould you make them your employment, inſtead of your amuſement, they will loſe all their reliſh. For it is with diverſions as it is with all other ſenſual pleaſures; the more frequently they are enjoyed, the leſs agreeable do they become; they pall upon the ſenſe, grow taſteleſs and inſipid, and at laſt perfectly nauſeous and irkſome: ſo that, as well from a regard to your own happineſs, as from a ſenſe of duty, you ſhould take care never to throw away too much of your time upon them. And, that you may not be tempted to do ſo, learn to employ yourſelf in ſome more ſerious and uſeful buſineſs; for I believe in my conſcience, that it is not ſo much from an immoderate love of pleaſure, as for want of ſomething elſe to do, that ſo many young ladies ſquander away the whole of their time in a perpetual round of diverſions.

At firſt, perhaps, they may have been led into this way of life by the natural gaiety and ſprightlineſs of their own minds, by the bad example of their companions, and by

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the too great indulgence of their parents and guardians; and after they have continued in it for ſome time, they contract ſuch a habit of levity and trifling, as utterly diſqualifies them for every thing that is ſerious and rational. Many a time, I dare ſay, they are heartily tired of their inſipid manner of life, of their laborious idleneſs: but what can they do? they can neither think nor talk of any thing but diverſions; and tho' theſe ſubjects may do very well now and then, yet they are too barren and ſuperficial to afford a conſtant fund of converſation to reaſonable and intelligent creatures!

What I have ſaid, my dear of diverſions in general, may be applied to gaming in particular, in which reſpect your aunt has acted with the greateſt prudence and diſcretion. She allows you to play ſometimes, becauſe it is proper you ſhould learn the different kinds of games, that you may be able to make one of a party upon occaſion; but ſhe won't allow you to play too frequently, leſt, by that means, you ſhould become immoderately fond of it; and, upon no account whatever, will ſhe allow you to play for money, becauſe that might produce a habit of avarice, the moſt baſe and ſordid paſſion that can enter into the breaſt of a young lady.

Of all kinds of diverſions that of gaming is the moſt enticing and bewitching, and therefore the moſt pernicious and deſtructive. As it depends partly on chance, and partly on art, a run of ſucceſs flatters our vanity in the higheſt degree: it is at once paying a compliment to our good fortune, and to our good underſtanding; and I have ſeen a young thoughtleſs creature aſſume more merit to herſelf, and ſeem better ſatisfied with her own conduct for winning a few games, than one of more ſenſe and leſs vanity would have been for ſettling and ballancing her mother's accounts, or performing any other of the moſt important duties of life.

But if this run of good luck, beſides flattering her vanity, is at the ſame time filling her pockets with money, then the love of gaming grows upon her apace: it ſeizes and engroſſes her whole ſoul; it ſhuts her eyes, as it were, and ſtops her ears againſt every other object; it employs her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night: and ſhe is never happy but when ſhe is either preparing for, or is actually engaged in it. When a perſon is arrived at ſuch a degree of phrenzy as this (for I can call it no better) ſhe is labouring under one of the moſt violent and dangerous diſeaſes of the mind, from which it is ten to one, if either

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the utmoſt exertion of her own reaſon, or the beſt advice of her friends will be able to recover her. And yet if ſhe is not recovered very ſoon, ſhe will be utterly ruined and undone; for if once the love of money grafted upon that of gaming has taken deep root in the ſoul, and is become the ruling paſſion, it bears down all before it; health, beauty, fame, fortune, happineſs, every thing is ſacrificed to it. This, my Dear, you will think is a hideous picture; and indeed ſo it is. Would to God there were no originals! I hope there are few, but ſtill I believe, nay I am certain there are ſome, tho' I truſt in God you will never make one of that unhappy number.

But ſuppoſe gaming were attended with none of theſe dreadful effects, yet methinks, the trifling and inſipid nature of the thing itſelf might be a ſufficient argument to diſſuade any ſenſible perſon from ſpending her time in it. To paſs whole afternoons without any other ideas in the mind, than ſuch as ariſe from the colour of a card, the number of a die, or the like; good God! Is this to behave like rational creatures?

I know your profeſſed gameſters tell another tale, and that to play well requires greater abilities, a quicker apprehenſion, more penetration and depth of thought than almoſt any employment whatever; and that

that, what with forming ſchemes, and calculating chances, their minds are more actively employed than that of the merchant, who is writing letters of buſineſs to all the different parts of the world. Perhaps they may; tho', methinks, I could ſtop the mouths of all ſuch vain boaſters by this ſingle queſtion: *Whether they are as uſefully employed for the public good?*

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to condemn all manner of gaming: far from it. On the contrary, I think every young lady ſhould underſtand the different games that are moſt in vogue, that ſo ſhe may not be put to the bluſh, if at any time ſhe is deſired to join in a party. It is a very agreeable amuſement to paſs away an idle hour now and then; but ſtill I would have you to remember what I told you before, that it is only to be conſidered as a diverſion, and not as a real employment.—— Pleaſe to preſent my compliments to your aunt and all her family. Your papa, your brothers and ſiſters join me in wiſhing you all manner of happineſs. I am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

YOUR two letters on dreſs and diverſions came ſafe to hand. I am greatly obliged to you for your good advice and directions, and will endeavour to conduct myſelf accordingly. But ſince you will not allow me to ſpend ſo much of my time on theſe trifles, as I ſee others of my age and quality do, you muſt be ſo good as to find me in ſome more uſeful employment; for of all things I hate to be idle; and yet I am afraid I ſhall frequently be obliged to be ſo, till I receive your further inſtructions. For, as moſt parts of my education are nearly, if not entirely finiſhed, I don't know how to diſpoſe of my time.

Sometimes, indeed, I take a book in my hand; but as I have been told there are more bad than good ones, and don't know what particular authors are moſt proper for my peruſal, I am afraid to dip too deep into them, leſt I ſhould do myſelf more ill than good. Sometimes I work a little at my needle, but lay it aſide preſently when I begin to reflect that I am under no neceſſity of ſubmitting to that drudgery, as I can have others to do it for me. Sometimes

I join in converſation with my aunt, and ſuch company as are viſiting her, and theſe indeed are the happieſt hours I paſs. This however is a pleaſure I ſeldom enjoy, and perhaps, if I enjoyed it oftener, it might loſe its reliſh.

But, notwithſtanding all theſe various amuſements, I ſtill find I have ſeveral vacant hours, which begin to lie heavy on my hand; and, if I cannot fall upon ſome method of employing them one way or other, I am afraid they will at laſt become intolerably irkſome and diſagreeable. Let me therefore again intreat you, my dear Mamma, to ſend me, by the firſt opportunity, your beſt advice on the employment and improvement of my time. Pleaſe to offer my duty to my papa, and my love to my brothers and ſiſters. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XXVIII.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Am glad to ſee by your laſt, that you are fully convinced of the truth of what I ſaid concerning dreſs and diverſions, and are ſo ſenſible of the ineſtimable worth and value of

of your time, which indeed is the moſt precious treaſure you can poſſeſs, as it is the foundation and ground-work of every other bleſſing you enjoy.

But precious as our time is, yet there is not any one thing of which we are ſo careleſs, or rather prodigal and profuſe. We either ſquander it away upon mere trifles, or allow it to paſs in a ſtate of liſtleſs indolence, or lazy inactivity. The preſent moment we ſeldom enjoy, or improve to any good purpoſe. We are perpetually buſied in forming ſchemes for ſome future and diſtant period; and when that period is come, we neglect it, as we have done thoſe that are already paſt; and then lay new ſchemes for ſome other period more diſtant ſtill: and ſo on without end; till, at laſt arrived on the verge of old age, we begin to take a review of our paſt conduct, and find, that we have conſumed the greateſt part of our time in forming ſchemes and reſolutions, but have hardly ever had the wiſdom and courage to put ſo much as one of them in execution.

Such, my Dear, is the picture of a lazy, indolent, and idle perſon: for, I believe, even the lazieſt of that lazy tribe have ſtill ſome thoughts of doing better to-morrow; but to-morrow comes and paſſes like to-day, and another morrow after that; and thus they doze away their whole lives in a kind of

waking dream or revery. Such a conduct as this would be extremely fooliſh and abſurd, even upon the ſuppoſition that they were certain of arriving at old age, tho' indeed it were to be wiſhed, for the honour of their character, that they never reached that period, ſince the longer they live, they only become the more ridiculous: but when it is conſidered that no one can promiſe herſelf another year, and hardly even another day or hour, then folly is too gentle a name for ſuch a behaviour; 'tis madneſs, 'tis phrenzy in the higheſt degree: and yet with this phrenzy and madneſs every perſon may be ſaid to be ſeized, who conſumes her whole life in idleneſs and indolence.

But, my Dear, don't miſtake me. I don't mean to inſinuate, by any thing I have now ſaid, that the mind ſhould always be kept on the ſtretch; the contrary of this I have allowed in ſome of my former letters: but this, I think, I may ſafely affirm, that it ought always to be engaged one way or other, either in ſome uſeful and profitable employment, or in ſome innocent and chearful diverſion, that it may return to the duties of life with greater vigor and alacrity; but never, by any means, ſhould it be ſuffered to ruſt in ſloth and inactivity.

Idleneſs, my Dear, is a moſt pernicious and fatal vice, whether we conſider its influence

fluence on the mind or the body. It weakens the ſtrength and impairs the beauty of the latter; for an indolent perſon will hardly be at the pains to take ſo much exerciſe as is neceſſary to keep the body in health and vigor. It ſtupifies and benumbs the underſtanding; for ſhe will not take the trouble to improve it, either by reading or converſation. Nay it will even corrupt and debaſe the heart; for it is inconſiſtent with a ſtate of eaſe and indolence to have the ſtrong but fine, affections of love, pity, compaſſion, ſorrow, ſympathy and the like, frequently awakened and excited in the breaſt: and yet, if theſe tender paſſions are not frequently excited either by real or imaginary objects, the heart will gradually become hard and unfeeling, and at laſt perfectly callous and inſenſible.

This diſeaſe of idleneſs has different effects upon different tempers. What tempts Mrs. Stanley to ſpend the greateſt part of her time in ſcandal and defamation? why, 'tis idleneſs working upon a diſpoſition naturally ſour and ſplenetick. What makes miſs Temple trifle away her whole life in an inſipid round of public and private diverſions? becauſe ſhe has got nothing elſe to do; 'tis idleneſs working upon the natural levity and giddineſs of her mind. In a word, idleneſs is the parent, or at leaſt the nurſe, of

moſt of the follies and vices incident to human nature, and from which we might eaſily be preſerved, would we only take care to keep ourſelves always engaged either in ſome uſeful employment or innocent amuſement. I ſhall, therefore, endeavour to point out ſuch employments and amuſements as appear to be moſt proper for one of your age and quality; tho' indeed you have in a great meaſure prevented me, your own good ſenſe having directed you to ſome of the beſt and moſt rational.

But firſt, my Dear, I muſt obſeve that you are greatly miſtaken, in thinking that your education is entirely finiſhed. It is true you are no more under the direction of teachers: but what then? are you therefore to lay aſide all further care and concern about the ſeveral parts of your education? if you do, you may depend upon it, you will very ſoon forget them; and then all the inſtruction you have got, will go for nothing. As therefore you would wiſh to retain the different arts and accompliſhments you have learned, you muſt take care to be frequently practiſing them; for by this means only can they be remembered.

But, my Dear, you ought not only to remember what you have learned; you ought to do more; you ought to be making daily progreſs and improvement in all the differ-

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ent parts of your education: for if you are not gaining ground, you may be ſure you are loſing it; there is no ſuch thing as ſtanding ſtill. Learning is like climbing up a ſteep aſcent; if you are not moving upwards, you will be in danger of ſliding down to the bottom. Beſides, teachers ſeldom do any more, and indeed they hardly can do any more, than to point out the road and ſhew us the way: it is our buſineſs to profit and improve by their advice and directions; if we do not, all the teaching and inſtruction in the world will never make us good for any thing. A perſon poſſeſſed of no taſte or genius, will never learn any polite art or accompliſhment, had ſhe an an angel for her inſtructor; and ſhe, that is careleſs and negligent, will as certainly forget what ſhe has learned.

Let me, therefore, perſuade you, my dear Sophy, to employ two or three hours every day in reviſing all the different parts of your education. By this means you will at once impreſs them on your memory, and acquire ſuch an eaſe and facility in performing, as can only be obtained by careful and conſtant practice. But, tho' I would have you carefully to review all the arts and accompliſhments you have learned, yet I think you ought, at the ſame time, to make a diſtinction. There are ſome of them, ſuch

as muſic, dancing, drawing, and the like, which are merely, or at leaſt chiefly, ornamental. There are others, which, beſides being ornamental, are likewiſe uſeful, ſuch as writing, arithmetic, geography, and needle-work. Now, tho' I would by no means have you to neglect the former, but on the contrary to be daily improving in them; yet I think you ought to apply your chief attention to the latter. For, whatever you may think at preſent, you will be convinced, when you come to underſtand the true value of things, that what is uſeful, is of infinitely greater conſequence and importance than what is only ornamental: and for one married lady, that complains of her not having learned to dance, ſing, or draw better, there are hundreds who lament that they did not take more pains to improve themſelves in writing, cyphering, and other uſeful arts.

You ſometimes work a little at your needle, you ſay, but throw it aſide when you begin to reflect that you can employ others to work for you: a very pretty reaſon truly! Why, my Dear, you might excuſe yourſelf from every thing elſe by the very ſame argument. You can pay others to write, caſt accompts, ſing, dance, draw, in a word, to do any thing for you. But, when theſe people write, ſing, dance, &c. for your money,

money, whether is it you or they that perform? Or does their performing for your money make you a whit the more learned or accompliſhed? Think with yourſelf, my Dear: where will your excuſe end? Why, it will end in this concluſion, that, becauſe you are rich and have an eaſy fortune, you may therefore remain ignorant and idle; a fine way of reaſoning indeed! But to be ſerious, you ought to attend to your needle-work, and to acquire a perfect knowledge of that uſeful art, not only as it is a genteel accompliſhment, but likewiſe from the motives of œconomy and convenience: for no woman, let her rank and fortune be what they will, ſhould think it below her to make ſome of the nicer parts of her own dreſs. I have ſeveral head-dreſſes of my own making; and I am ſure I always wear them with greater pleaſure, than I do thoſe that have been made by others. This, methinks, is an excuſable vanity.

You know lady Emilia Montague. Her fortune is larger, and her quality much higher than yours; and yet, when her papa was confined, laſt winter, with a long and ſevere fit of the gout, ſhe attended upon him ſo cloſely, that ſhe hardly ever left his room; and what kinds of needle work were wanted for his uſe, ſhe made with her own hands, and would not allow any perſon to de-

prive her of what, ſhe ſaid, was both her honour and pleaſure. This has ſo endeared her to her papa, that, tho' he was very fond of her before, he is now doubly ſo; and I am credibly informed that he has lately made a conſiderable addition to her fortune, and probably for this very reaſon.

But there is no way, my Dear, in which you may paſs your time with greater pleaſure than in reading good and ſenſible books. This is, at once, a moſt rational employment, and a moſt agreeable amuſement. It is one of the greateſt inlets of knowledge and wiſdom, and one of the moſt effectual methods of baniſhing ignorance, prejudice, and error. It is an inexhauſtible ſource of uſeful inſtruction and delightful entertainment. And it has this advantage above all other amuſements, that here you may chuſe your company as you pleaſe. If you are diſpoſed to be grave and ſerious, or chearful and merry; if you want to inform your underſtanding, delight your imagination, or affect your heart; you will find authors that will anſwer all or any of theſe purpoſes; and with this additional recommendation into the bargain, that whenever you are weary of their company, you can leave it without the imputation of ill-manners. 'Tis but cloſing the book, and then your well-bred companions immediately diſappear.

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But of all the different kinds of reading, there is none that can afford more profitable inſtruction, or more delightful entertainment than that of hiſtory. It introduces us to the company of all the great and illuſtrious perſonages that have gone before us; makes us talk and converſe with them, almoſt as familiarly as if we had been their contemporaries; and acquaints us with their manners, characters, virtues, and vices. It carries us back into the earlieſt ages of antiquity, and thus makes us to live over, as it were, all that period of time which has paſſed ſince the creation. It tranſports us into the moſt diſtant regions of the earth, and, by the help of geography, makes us travel, in imagination, over the whole habitable world, without once ſtirring out of our room.

And now, my Dear, that I have mentioned geography, you will remember I told you in a former letter, that it would be of great ſervice to you in the ſtudy of hiſtory; and indeed ſo it will, if you make a proper uſe of it. For this purpoſe, you muſt take care never to read any particular tranſaction, without placing before you a map of the country where the ſcene is laid: this will both give you a more full and comprehenſive view of the ſubject, and impreſs it more deeply on your memory. Thus

geography and hiſtory will mutually aid and aſſiſt each other: geography will make you underſtand hiſtorical facts more diſtinctly, and remember them more faithfully; and hiſtory will furniſh you with a more accurate deſcription of the climate, ſoil, and produce of the various parts of the earth; and with a more particular account of the manners, cuſtoms, and characters of the ſeveral inhabitants.

From this inexhauſtible ſource of profit and pleaſure, you may derive the wiſeſt maxims and rules of life. Here you will behold the obedient child, the dutiful daughter, the chaſte virgin, the prudent mother, and the reſigned and pious widow; and, by obſerving how others have acted when ſurrounded with dangers, or involved in difficulties, you will learn how to behave yourſelf when placed in the ſame, or the like circumſtances. Here you may behold every virtue that can dignify human nature in general, or the female ſex in particular, reduced into practice. In a word, here you may acquire the knowledge of the world, without the danger of being infected by its bad example; which, indeed, is a circumſtance peculiar to hiſtory alone.

Hiſtory and converſation are the only two ways, in which you can obtain this knowledge.

ledge. The latter is perhaps the moſt infallible method, but at the ſame time, it is the moſt dangerous; the former, though leſs exact and particular, is certainly much more ſafe and ſecure. When we behold a vicious character in converſation, it is frequently varniſhed over with ſo many agreeable qualities, ſuch as wit, humour, gaiety, and chearfulneſs, that we are often inclined to love the perſon, though we hate the vice; and when once we love the perſon, we are in danger of loving the character in general, and conſequently of being infected and corrupted by the baneful influence of bad example. But in hiſtory the caſe is very different; there vice is ſtript of all its foreign and fictitious ornaments; there it appears naked and unmaſked in all its native uglineſs and deformity, and needs only to be ſhewn, in order to be ſhunned; it needs only be expoſed in its true and genuine colours, in order to become the object of univerſal hatred and deteſtation.

It is true, what you gain in one point, you loſe in another. What you gain with reſpect to vicious characters, you loſe with regard to thoſe that are virtuous; for, as vice appears moſt odious in hiſtory, ſo virtue appears moſt amiable in real life: here it is ſo lighted up and animated, ſo recommended and enforced by the modeſt and benign

nign look, the engaging manner, the courteous behaviour, and winning addreſs, that what in deſcription would only be agreeable and beautiful, is thus rendered irreſiſtibly charming and attractive. But as there are more bad than good characters in the world, and as the art of life conſiſts as much in knowing what to avoid as what to purſue, this conſideration, perhaps, may be ſufficient to counter-balance the loſs. But the truth is, hiſtory and converſation are entirely diſtinct: each hath its ſeveral advantages, nor does the one encroach upon the province of the other. Hiſtory repreſents the time paſt, converſation deſcribes the time preſent: hiſtory ſhews us the world as it has been, converſation ſhews us the world as it now actually is: hiſtory informs us how our anceſtors have behaved, converſation tells us how our contemporaries are now behaving. Thus hiſtory and converſation go hand-in-hand, and kindly join their mutual aid in furniſhing the mind with knowledge and inſtruction.

Of all the different kinds of hiſtory, that of your own country ſhould be the firſt object of your ſtudy and attention; for to be deeply read in the hiſtory of other countries, and yet ignorant of the hiſtory of your own, would be as abſurd and prepoſterous, as to be intimately acquainted with what paſſes in

your

your neighbour's houſe, without knowing what happens in your own family. What hiſtory of England I ſhould recommend to your peruſal, I am ſomewhat at a loſs to determine. After all the hiſtories of this kingdom, that have yet been offered to the public, Rapin's is, I think, at once the moſt full and the moſt impartial. But, as that may be deemed rather too tedious for one of your age and capacity, I would have you, in the mean time, to read a very judicious and accurate Abridgment of Engliſh hiſtory, written in the form of letters from a nobleman to his ſon, and printed in two volumes 12mo.; and, after you are farther advanced in years, you may then read Rapin's, or any other hiſtory of England, which your father or your uncle may judge moſt proper.

And here, I am afraid, moſt people will imagine, that your knowledge in hiſtory may ſtop. They think it is ſufficient for a lady to underſtand the hiſtory of her own country; and that any further knowledge, of this kind, is ſuperfluous, and out of character. But, I muſt own, I am of a very different opinion; for I think that every accompliſhed woman ſhould have a tolerable knowledge of hiſtory in general. I don't pretend to ſay, that we ſhould be ſo thoroughly verſed, or ſo deeply read, in univerſal

ſal hiſtory, as the men are; far from it: I have already allowed, that as our ſphere of action is more narrow and confined, ſo our knowledge may be more ſlight and ſuperficial. But what then? Becauſe we are not to be ſo knowing as the men, muſt we therefore be allowed to know little or nothing at all? Becauſe we are not to aſpire to the character of univerſal ſcholars, muſt we therefore be obliged to remain in the moſt profound ignorance? a pretty way of reaſoning truly! And in this reſpect, methinks, the men act very unreaſonably: they frequently alledge that young ladies cannot join in ſenſible and ſerious converſation, and yet they will not allow them to acquire that kind of knowledge, which alone can qualify them for it: they firſt keep them ignorant, and then complain of their ignorance; generous treatment indeed! But to be ſerious, my Dear, I believe we ourſelves are moſt to blame: our ignorance is rather to be imputed to our own lazy, fickle, and trifling diſpoſition, than to any ill advice or undue influence of the men.

The only plauſible objection I ever heard againſt a lady's being learned, is, that it naturally tends to make her vain, conceited, and impertinent, and to neglect thoſe qualifications and accompliſhments which are the diſtinguiſhing ornaments of her ſex.

ſex. But this is a mere pretext, a groſs fallacy and deluſion; for ſhe who is impertinent with learning, would have been equally impertinent without it; ſhe who is now a prattling pedant, would have been otherwiſe a fluttering coquette. The truth is, good ſenſe is the gift of nature, and not the acquiſition of art: we are born either with the ſeeds of wiſdom or of folly: education may increaſe theſe qualities where it finds them, but can never produce them where they are not; and all the knowledge and learning in the world, will never convert a natural fool into a ſenſible woman, nor a ſenſible woman into a fool. It is not learning that makes a woman vain and impertinent; no: it only draws her natural vanity and impertinence into a certain channel, and makes her expreſs them in a particular manner; for vain and impertinent ſhe would have been, whether ſhe had been learned or not.

I muſt, therefore, inſiſt upon it as the privilege of our ſex, that we be allowed to know more than the hiſtory of our own country. For even granting that this kind of knowledge may have a bad effect on weak and ſilly minds, is that a ſufficient reaſon for excluding our whole ſex from the ſtudy of hiſtory? By the ſame way of reaſoning, the men too might be excluded; for, I think,

think, it is a notorious truth, that there are more men than women ſpoiled by learning; and for every female pedant, it would, perhaps, be no difficult matter to produce twenty male ones.

Next to the hiſtory of your own country I would have you to ſtudy that of Scotland; a ſufficient knowledge of which may, indeed, be eaſily acquired by any one that underſtands the hiſtory of England. For as the Scots never had, and, not being a maritime power, never could have, any very important concerns with any nation but the Engliſh, ſo all the moſt conſiderable tranſactions relating to that people may be found in the Engliſh hiſtory. You may read, however, Dr. Robertſon's Hiſtory of Scotland, which is a work of great merit, and is well worth your peruſal. You may likewiſe conſult Buchanan's Hiſtory with regard to the more early periods of the hiſtory of that kingdom.

Though there are ſeveral diſtinct hiſtories of all the different nations of Europe, yet, I am afraid, it would be deemed preſumptuous in one of my ſex, to ſay which of them are the beſt; and, beſides, I think it is better to give your ſtudies a certain, fix'd, and determined aim, that you may not be perpetually rambling from book to book, without ever finiſhing any one. I would therefore adviſe you to read the Univerſal

Hiſtory,

Hiſtory, or at leaſt, an Abridgment of the Univerſal Hiſtory, ancient and modern. This, to be ſure, will be a work of much time and ſome labour, though, I hope, the pleaſure will be more than ſufficient to compenſate for the labour; and as to the time, you know you have plenty to ſpare: you are ſtill but young, and it is of no conſequence though you ſhould not finiſh it for ſome five or ſix years; which I imagine, however, you may eaſily do, by only reading an hour or two every day, and this, I dare ſay, you will think no difficult taſk.

There is another large field of reading, my Dear, in which you may employ your time with great pleaſure and delight; I mean in novels, romances, plays, and every other kind of poetry. To theſe may be added, the Spectators, Guardians, and Tatlers, which will ſerve to give you a notion of the foibles and faſhions of the laſt age; as alſo the Rambler, Idler, Adventurer, and Connoiſſeur, which will let you into the prevailing humours of the preſent.

With regard to plays, I don't know any complete volumes that are faultleſs, though I could name many ſingle plays that are ſo; but in the choice of theſe, as well as of romances, I think you had better conduct yourſelf by the advice of your aunt, and never venture to read any but ſuch as ſhe approves.

proves. What plays ſhe allows your to ſee acted, you may doubtleſs read with ſafety; and perhaps it would not be amiſs to read every play before you go to ſee it repreſented. This, to be ſure, will leſſen the pleaſure of novelty and ſurprize; but to compenſate for that trifling loſs, it will give you a more full and diſtinct view of the ſubject, and make you a more competent judge of the merit and abilities of the ſeveral actors.

And as the previous reading of a play, will enable you to behold the repreſentation of it with more judgment and diſcernment, ſo the repreſentation will teach you to read with greater juſtneſs and propriety. Here you may obſerve what geſture, what look, what tone and accent is moſt proper to expreſs every particular paſſion of the ſoul; and without underſtanding theſe diſtinctly, and being able to aſſume and practiſe them upon occaſion, no perſon can read with a good grace.

I don't mean, however, that you ſhould read with a theatrical air, becauſe that might favour too much of affectation; but you certainly ought to read with a proper and natural one, otherwiſe you never can read well. What a ridiculous thing would it be to pronounce an angry, paſſionate ſpeech, with a low, gentle, and ſoft accent, or to repeat a mournful and melancholy com-

complaint, in a loud, bluſtering, and thundering tone? This were to invert the nature of things, and to deſtroy all order and propriety. The truth is, all the ſeveral paſſions of the ſoul have certain tones of voice, which are peculiarly adapted to expreſs them; and therefore whatever paſſion a ſpeech or ſentence contains, it ſhould always be read with its proper and natural accent. This is one of the greateſt niceties and beauties in reading, but in which, I am ſorry to ſay it, moſt ladies are extremely deficient. They read a hiſtory, a romance, a play, a letter, an advertiſement, every thing with the ſame uniform, unmeaning tone; ſo that unleſs you attend to the ſenſe you ſhall not be able to judge by their manner what they are reading.

I muſt confeſs I was ſomewhat diverted, or rather indeed vexed and chagrined, at an incident of this nature, which happened lately. I went one day to viſit lady Dalſton. As, you know, ſhe is a woman of ſenſe and prudence, inſtead of calling for the cards after tea, ſhe deſired her eldeſt daughter to read to us the play of Zara, in which there are many affecting ſcenes, and pathetic ſpeeches. About the time ſhe had finiſhed the firſt act, Mr. Townſhend happened to call upon her papa, who ſtepped into the next room, where they had a private conference

ference for a quater of an hour: but as the door ſtood open, Mr. Townſhend could very eaſily hear miſs reading all the while. Upon his coming into the room where we were, after the uſual compliments were over, he aſked the young lady if that was not a volume of Rapin ſhe had got in her hand. As bad a reader as ſhe was, ſhe ſeemed to be ſenſible of the ſatire; and therefore anſwered with a deep bluſh, that it was not Rapin, but a volume of plays. Upon this, the gentleman ſtood confounded for a little, not knowing what decent apology to make; but at laſt, recollecting himſelf, he begged her pardon, and told her that he ſhould not have aſked ſuch an impertinent queſtion, if he had either heard or ſeen her reading; though moſt of the company knew very well that he had done both. But in truth, from her inſipid and lifeleſs manner of reading, he might as well have taken it for a book of cookery, as for a volume of hiſtory or plays.

But if this inſtance of bad reading gave me pain and uneaſineſs, I muſt own another inſtance of fine reading, (which I lately had an opportunity of hearing) gave me as much pleaſure and delight. Some months ago, I went to viſit the counteſs of Egremont, who, you know, has a numerous family of daughters, and beſides ſhe had, at that time, ſome five or ſix viſitants from London.

One

One evening as we were taking a walk along the banks of the river, which runs hard by the garden-wall, we eſpied, at a diſtance, a young lady, ſitting in a kind of natural arbour, with a book in her hand, which ſhe ſeemed to be reading, with great vehemence and emotion. We preſently began to form conjectures what might be the ſubject of the book. At firſt we were of different opinions, ſome thinking it to be one thing and ſome another; but upon obſerving her air and manner more attentively, and even before we came within reach of the ſound, we all agreed that it muſt be ſome play. As we approached nearer, and heard the tone of her voice, though without underſtanding the ſenſe, we were ſtill more confirmed in our former opinion. Miſs was ſo deeply engaged, that we were almoſt cloſe to her before ſhe perceived us; which, however, when ſhe did, ſhe ſeemed to be a little ſurpriſed, put up her book, and riſing, with a decent and modeſt bluſh, courteſy'd to the company. The counteſs, who was very well acquainted with the young lady (who happened to be the parſon's daughter) begged her to tell us ingenuouſly what book it was ſhe had been reading; upon which ſhe pulled it out of her pocket, and ſhewed us that it was a volume of Shakeſpeare's plays.

The

The truth is, you may judge from the air, manner, and geſture of a good reader, or at moſt, from the inarticulate ſound of her voice, though you ſhould not be near enough to comprehend the ſenſe, what is the general ſubject of the book. But with a bad reader, you muſt hear and underſtand the full ſenſe and meaning of every word and expreſſion, before you can know what ſhe is about; otherwiſe you ſhall not be able to diſtinguiſh whether ſhe is reading a play or an advertiſement, the deſcription of a battle or of a funeral proceſſion. Beſides, there is another material difference between a good and bad reader, which is this, that the former conveys the author's meaning fully and diſtinctly to her hearers, and makes a deep and laſting impreſſion upon their minds; whereas the latter makes little or no impreſſion at all; or if ſhe does, it is rather owing to the merit of the book, than to her inſipid manner of reading it.

But there is ſtill another advantage, which may be derived from reading good and ſenſible books: they will not only inform your underſtanding, delight your imagination, correct your taſte, and improve your heart, but they will likewiſe give you a natural, eaſy, and elegant manner of expreſſing yourſelf, whether in ſpeaking or writing. This, my Dear, though ſeemingly a trifling accom-

accompliſhment, is, in reality, a moſt neceſſary part of polite education; and it is as great a ſhame for a young lady not to be able to tell a ſtory with eaſe and fluency, or to write an elegant and genteel letter, as not to know how to dance a minuet.

Indeed, this elegance of taſte and propriety of language will be beſt learned, by reading a collection of familiar epiſtles But of this kind, I am ſorry to ſay it, we have none in Engliſh, that are proper for the peruſal of a young lady. The letters of Pope and Fitz-Oſbourne, and Pliny's epiſtles tranſlated by Melmoth, are, no doubt, excellent in their kind; but then, they are rather too learned and laboured for one of your ſex and age. You may read them, however, with great ſafety, profit and pleaſure: they will, at leaſt, improve your taſte and language in general: though, perhaps, they will not teach you that eaſy, free, and familiar ſtyle, which is peculiarly adapted for female epiſtolary writing.

But what you cannot have in Engliſh, you may eaſily find in French, a language which you happily underſtand. Indeed this is a ſpecies of writing, in which the French ſeem to excel us. Whether it be, that that lively and ſprightly humour, which makes them more talkative in converſation than we are, leads them, at the ſame time, to write with

greater eaſe, elegance, and propriety; or that the modeſty of the Engliſh ladies will not allow them to publiſh their private letters, though perhaps equal, if not ſuperior to theirs, I will not take upon me to determine; but certain it is, that they have much larger and much better collections of familiar epiſtles, written by ladies, than any that have ever been produced in this country. Madame de Sévigné's letters are finiſhed models of this kind; and theſe I would adviſe you to read with great care and attention. There you will behold all the different ſentiments, paſſions, and affections of the human mind, expreſſed in the moſt proper and natural language.

And, after you have acquired ſome taſte in this way, I would have you to try your ſkill and abilities, by beginning an epiſtolary correſpondence with ſome of your abſent friends. It is true, you have wrote me ſeveral letters already, with which I am very well pleaſed: and though it cannot be expected they ſhould be perfect in their kind, yet they plainly ſhow that you have the rudiments of good ſenſe and fine taſte within you. But, my Dear, you will write with greater eaſe and freedom to young ladies of your own age; and, I am ſure, there are ſeveral here, who would be glad of your correſpondence, as you have it in your power

power to oblige them much more, by ſending them the news of London, than they can poſſibly oblige you, by any thing they can write you from the country. Let me, therefore, adviſe you to eſtabliſh a correſpondence as ſoon as poſſible, with a few of your abſent friends, and you will ſoon find the good effects of it: you will find yourſelf grow more expert every day, in the art of letter-writing; for in this, as well as in every thing elſe, practice is the only means to arrive at perfection.

There is only one general advice I would give you in this caſe; when you are going to write a letter, ſit down and compoſe your mind; diſengage yourſelf from every other care and concern; recall to your memory the idea of your abſent friend; repreſent her to your imagination, as if ſhe were actually preſent, and were talking and converſing with you; and after you have heated your fancy, and warmed your heart, by this imaginary converſation, then give full ſcope to the natural overflowings of your ſoul; take the pen, and write down whatever comes uppermoſt in your mind, without ceremony or reſtraint. By this means you will write with greater eaſe, elegance, and propriety, than if you ſhould ſit for hours together, muſing, and ſtudying, and racking your brain, for turns of wit, and flights of

fancy. However, before you can ſucceed in this way, you muſt have acquired ſuch a copious and fluent ſtyle, as to be able to clothe all your ſentiments in proper and expreſſive language.

But, as I would not wiſh to tire you with the immoderate length of my letter, I muſt break off, and reſerve what I have further to ſay on this head, for the ſubject of my next. Meanwhile I conclude, by recommending you to the protection of Almighty God. I ever am,

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XXIX.

My dear SOPHY,

I Now ſit down to reſume the ſubject which I treated pretty largely, but could not finiſh in my laſt. Another way, then, in which you may employ your time with equal profit and pleaſure, is, in converſing with a ſet of ſenſible and ingenious friends. Converſation, my Dear, will whet your genius, awaken and fix your attention, warm and improve your heart, poliſh and refine your

your manners, and give you a certain eaſe and elegance of addreſs, which is not to be obtained in any other way.

And it has this peculiar advantage above reading, that, whatever doubts and difficulties occur, you can eaſily have them ſolved and cleared up, by only aſking a few queſtions; whereas, in reading, if you meet with a dark and obſcure paſſage, the author is not at hand to tell you his meaning, but, in order to find out the ſenſe, you muſt depend entirely on your own acuteneſs and penetration. Nay, what is more, you may even have thoſe very difficulties, which occur in reading, explained in converſation, as it is ten to one but there are ſome in the company, who have read the ſame book, and perhaps underſtand it better than you; or, though none of them ſhould underſtand it perfectly, yet by hearing their different ſentiments and opinions, you may, at leaſt, approach nearer to the ſenſe.

And I think it would be a good maxim to make what you have been lately reading the ſubject of converſation, as often as you decently can, without the imputation of pedantry; which, however, you will be in no danger of incurring in the company of your friends, as I take it for granted, that their taſte and way of thinking is pretty much the ſame with your own. By this

means you will not only have your doubts removed, but, by conſidering and examining the ſame thing in a variety of lights, you will even underſtand more diſtinctly what you thought you underſtood ſufficiently before.

In company we frequently ſay a thouſand ſmart and ingenious things, which would never have come into our head while alone. Converſation is a kind of touch-ſtone, that tries and examines the real ſtrength and abilities of the mind, and draws forth the latent ſparks of genius, which lie concealed within it, and which otherwiſe might have lain concealed for ever; as flints, which though they contain the ſeeds of fire, yet unleſs they are mutually ſtruck againſt one another will never produce any flame.

Converſation is one of the beſt ſchools in the world for learning the virtues of modeſty and humility, as you will there be accuſtomed to hear your own ſentiments and opinions freely examined and canvaſſed, and ſometimes contradicted and refuted; whereas one who is always moping and muſing by herſelf, is apt to contract a ſullen, ſulky, and ſupercilious air: and, if at any time ſhe engages in converſation, ſhe is ſo proud and conceited that ſhe cannot bear contradiction.

The rules of polite converſation, you know, I have explained above, ſo that here I need

I need be the leſs particular. I ſhall only add, that if you happen to be interrupted in telling a ſtory, you ought to conſider with yourſelf who it is that interrupts you.

If it be a perſon of ſenſe and diſcretion, you ſhould not reſume the ſubject by any means, unleſs you are importuned to it by the lady herſelf and the reſt of the company; and in that caſe I would not have you to refuſe; to do ſo might have too much the appearance of pique and reſentment, as if you were affronted and had taken offence, which you ſhould never do, or at leaſt never ſeem to do: for this, in my opinion, is always a mark of a weak, ſilly, and childiſh mind, and is utterly inconſiſtent with all the rules of politeneſs and good-breeding. Perhaps it was a miſtake in the lady, and even the moſt ſenſible are not free from miſtakes. But if it was done deſignedly, and you are not deſired to go on with your ſtory; then you may depend upon it, you deſerved to be interrupted; then you ſhould not only drop your ſtory entirely, but you ought likewiſe to profit and improve by this friendly correction, and learn to behave better for the future.

If you are interrupted by a perſon of little or no ſenſe, even in this caſe you ſhould not be too forward in reſuming your ſtory, unleſs you are deſired to do ſo by ſome one of

the company, and the reſt ſeem to expect it by their looks and ſilence: otherwiſe, if they go on to talk of ſomething elſe, you may be certain they are heartily tired of your inſipid trifling; though perhaps they condemn the ill-manners of the perſon who interrupted you, yet they are glad that your mouth is ſtopt at any rate.

This practice, my Dear, of telling ſtories is one of the moſt nice and delicate points in converſation, and in which many people are apt to commit the groſſeſt blunders. I don't ſay that a perſon ſhould never take the liberty of telling a ſtory in company; but this I ſay, that when ſhe does ſo, which by the bye ought to be extremely ſeldom, her ſtory ſhould always be very ſhort and very diſtinct; otherwiſe, inſtead of being a pleaſant and agreeable companion, as perhaps ſhe fondly imagines ſhe is, ſhe will become a trifling and impertinent babbler. But your profeſſed ſtory-tellers are not content with taking this liberty now and then; they muſt be perpetually engaged in the ſame old beaten track, or they would be perfectly ſilent, for they have got nothing elſe to ſay. You ſhall hear one of this character begin a long, dull, perplexed ſtory; and after having babbled on for a quarter of an hour, ſome one of the company, who has ſenſe enough to perceive her impertinence, and courage enough to give

give it a check, introduces ſome other ſubject. Well! madam wraps herſelf up in her own thoughts, and remains in a kind of ſilent ſuſpenſe, regardleſs of what they are ſaying, (for your ſtory-tellers never attend to the diſcourſe of other people) and waits only for a freſh opportunity of reſuming the thread of her important hiſtory. As ſoon as ſhe obſerves a pauſe in the converſation, ſhe immediately ſeizes the much wiſhed-for moment, and with a ſelf ſufficient air, cries out, "as I was ſaying," though no body thinks it worth their while to remember one word ſhe was ſaying; and thus ſhe labours and trudges on, till at laſt the company loſe all patience, and either break up entirely to avoid the grating noiſe of her babbling tongue, or give her ſuch a ſevere reprimand, as can only be juſtified by the neceſſity of the caſe, and is not perhaps ſo very conſiſtent with the manners of polite company, into which however theſe impertinent fools ſhould never pretend to intrude.

But of all kind of ſtory-tellers, thoſe that deal in pedigrees, genealogies and family-connexions, are the moſt intolerable. One of this claſs, if ſhe happens to mention the name of any lady or gentleman, will trace you back their families to the time of William the Conqueror, and tell you every ſilly

thing that has been either ſaid or done by every one of their anceſtors.

For the misfortune is, that your mere ſtory-teller is always a perſon of weak underſtanding; ſhe has not judgment to diſtinguiſh between a matter of importance and a trifle, and of conſequence ſhe generally remembers thoſe actions only which were better forgotten, and forgets thoſe which deſerve to be remembered. In a word, a ſtory-teller is the peſt, the plague, the bane, the nuiſance of polite company; ſhe has no taſte nor genius, no fancy nor invention; her ſoul may be ſaid to be all over memory; ſhe cannot produce a good thought, nor ſay a ſmart and ſenſible thing of her own; and therefore ſhe is content to relate the trifling and inſignificant ſayings of others, which ſhe repeats by rote, like a prattling parrot or chattering magpye.

As therefore you would wiſh to obtain the character of an agreeable companion, and to avoid that of an impertinent trifler, you muſt take particular care never to fall into this common error; for that it is too common, you will ſoon be convinced by your own experience and obſervation.

Thus, my Dear, in reviewing all the different parts of your education in general, and particularly in working, reading, and converſation, you will find abundance of employment.

ployment. There are many other methods of ſpending your time, which I have purpoſely omitted here, becauſe they will come to be conſidered more properly afterwards. The ſtudy and practice of all the moral virtues will furniſh a large and extenſive field of exerciſe, in which you may, and ought to employ a conſiderable part of your time, as I ſhall endeavour to convince you in ſome other letter. At preſent, I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXX.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Received both your letters on the employment of time, and cannot expreſs how much I am obliged to you for your good and ſenſible advice, which you may be aſſured, I will carefully follow.

I remember, when I was at the boarding ſchool, I fondly imagined, that, by the time I was ſixteen or ſeventeen years of age, my

education would be entirely finiſhed, and I ſhould have nothing to mind but pleaſure and diverſion. But what a vain and fooliſh conceit has it been! I find, on the contrary, that the longer I live, I have the more to learn. I cannot ſay that I am diſappointed in this, as it gives me no pain nor uneaſineſs; I am rather pleaſed and delighted with it, as it ſhews that, when we arrive at the years of diſcretion, we are capable of ſo many rational exerciſes and employments, which we had not the leaſt notion of, whilſt we were young and inexperienced.

Indeed, it ſhould ſeem from the converſation of my aunt, that my education is very far from being completely finiſhed; for ſhe ſays, that, beſides reviewing the ſeveral qualifications and accompliſhments I have already acquired, there are many new virtues which I have ſtill to learn. She is perpetually reading lectures to my couſin and me on temperance, chaſtity, modeſty, humility, charity, benevolence, and I don't know how many other virtues, which, ſhe ſays, are the glory and ornament of the female ſex. It is true, ſhe is pleaſed to compliment us by ſaying, that we ſeldom tranſgreſs againſt any of theſe virtues, but alledges at the ſame time, that we do not ſufficiently underſtand their real nature and importance, nor how abſolutely neceſſary

it

it is to poſſeſs and practiſe them, in order to make us happy in ourſelves, and agreeable to the world.

Be ſo good, my dear Mamma, as to write me your opinion of all theſe matters in your next. For though my aunt and you will, in all probability, be pretty much of the ſame way of thinking, yet I ſhall at leaſt receive this one advantage from your letters, that I ſhall always have them by me, to conſult upon occaſion; and what I cannot underſtand or remember at one time, I may poſſibly do at another. Pleaſe to make my duty acceptable to my papa, and my love to my ſiſters and brothers. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XXXI.

FROM PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My Dear SOPHY,

I Received and read your letter with grea pleaſure and ſatisfaction. As you advance in years, your ſenſe of duty and obedience,

dience, inſtead of being diminiſhed, as is too frequently the caſe with young people, ſeems rather to be heightened and increaſed.

I am glad to ſee, that you are ſenſible of the folly and vanity of your childiſh fancies and imaginations, when you was at the boarding-ſchool. The ſenſe of our own folly and ignorance is the beſt ſymptom of our wiſdom and knowledge, and the ſureſt pledge of our further progreſs and improvement; but a fond conceit and high opinion of our own wiſdom and knowledge, is the moſt effectual bar in the way of our ever acquiring either of theſe excellent qualities. For how ſhould ſhe, who vainly thinks ſhe is wiſe and learned enough already, ever endeavour to become more ſo? How ſhould ſhe, who fondly imagines ſhe wants nothing, put herſelf to the trouble and labour of procuring what ſhe does not want? The truth is, a young lady, who fancies that ſhe is very wiſe and very learned, is likely to continue a fool and a dunce all her life.

What was your expectation, however, when you was at the boarding-ſchool, is, I dare ſay, the expectation of ninety-nine in a hundred at that time of life; and 'tis well if they don't conduct themſelves accordingly, when they arrive at what are uſually called, and what indeed ought to be, the years

of

of diſcretion. 'Tis well if they don't imagine, that they have already learned all that can or need be learned; that they are now women, and accompliſhed too, and therefore may devote their whole time and attention to dreſs, viſiting, and diverſions. But this, I would fain think, is the fate of very few, and, I am confident, it will never be yours: you have already given ſufficient proofs of your ſuperior ſenſe and prudence: you have already made ſome progreſs in thoſe higher kinds of learning, which are proper for a lady; and I hope you will continue to go on with the ſame ſpirit and alacrity, with which you have begun.

Your aunt's lectures, my Dear, (as you are pleaſed to call them) on temperance, chaſtity, modeſty humility, charity, benevolence and the like, are extremely proper and neceſſary. Theſe are virtues, which it is the duty of every young lady diſtinctly to underſtand, and carefully to practiſe: they are, as your aunt juſtly obſerves, the glory and ornament of the female ſex: they add an inexpreſſible grace and luſtre to all our other qualifications and accompliſhments; and without them, wit, beauty, knowledge, and learning, are not only uſeleſs and inſignificant, but, what is ſtill worſe, pernicious and deſtructive.

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A beautiful perſon, with a vicious mind, is no better than a painted ſepulchre, fair and comely without, but ugly and deformed whithin. A wit, without humanity and good-nature, is a peſt and nuiſance; like a venomous waſp, or poiſonous ſerpent, ſhe ſtings and bites every one ſhe meets, without diſtinction of friend or foe. And a perſon of knowledge and learning, without humility and modeſty, is generally a vain, conceited and prattling pedant.

On the other hand, a beautiful young lady, if ſhe is virtuous at the ſame time, becomes, by that means, at once more virtuous and more beautiful: more virtuous, becauſe her temptations to vice are more frequent and ſtrong; and every time ſhe reſiſts theſe temptations, ſhe gives the moſt convincing proof of her untainted chaſtity and unſpotted honour: more beautiful, for what is beauty? It is not a ſet of features formed with the niceſt ſymmetry and proportion? it is not a complexion compoſed of the pureſt red and white? no: but it is both theſe informed, inſpired, lighted up, and animated by the emanations of a virtuous mind: it is chaſtity, modeſty, good-nature, compaſſion, benevolence, and all the other virtuous diſpoſitions and tender affections ſtreaming forth from the eyes, thoſe windows of the ſoul, and playing in

every

every lineament of the face. Unleſs theſe virtues prevail in the ſoul, and are ſtrongly marked and expreſſed in the countenance, the fineſt features and complexion are little better than the face of a painted baby, or lifeleſs ſtatue: all is dull, dead, and inanimated; or, what is ſtill worſe, gloomy, ſour, and ſullen.

Hence the graceful bluſh of modeſty, and the pleaſing ſmile of good-nature, ſo frequently and ſo aukwardly affected by thoſe who are poſſeſſed of neither of theſe virtues, but perhaps are remarkable for the oppoſite vices: no matter, they are paying a compliment to virtue; they confeſs, by their hypocriſy and diſſimulation, that the appearance of it is amiable and lovely; and if the appearance of it be lovely, how much more muſt the reality be ſo? The truth is, virtue is the only thing that is good and amiable: ſenſe, wit, knowledge and learning, are, in their own nature, indifferent; they are either good or bad, juſt as they are well or ill employed. In the hands of a virtuous perſon, they may be the means of much good; in the hands of a vicious perſon, they may be the means of much ill: but, virtue in its own nature and conſequences, is certainly and infallibly productive of happineſs, as well to the perſon poſ-

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ſeſſed of it in particular, as to the world in general.

Hence too, my Dear, you will eaſily perceive what, I believe, you never dreamed of before, that no young lady can be beautiful without virtue. This opinion, I dare ſay, will make you ſtare——What! are there not ſeveral ladies in London, who have forfeited all title to virtue and honour, and notwithſtanding are reckoned among the greateſt beauties of the age? are courted, careſſed, and almoſt adored, by crowds of young gentlemen. But ſoftly, my Dear, and don't be in ſuch a hurry; allow me only to aſk you a ſingle queſtion: what is the character of theſe ſame young gentlemen? are they men of ſenſe, judgment, taſte, learning, knowledge, and virtue? or, are they not rather the vain, the ignorant, the ſilly and fooliſh, a parcel of empty coxcombs, and abandoned debauchées? Why, as for that, you'll ſay, you can't anſwer: but if you cannot anſwer for that, my Dear, how can you be ſure, whether theſe ladies are beautiful or not? For if the young gentlemen, that admire and adore them ſo much, are not proper judges of beauty, all their praiſes and compliments go for nothing; they are but mere empty ſound, without ſenſe or meaning.

Suppoſe, my Dear, a deaf perſon were

to

to tell you, that miſs Manly had a charming voice; or a blind one, that lady Aſton had a fine complexion; would you believe them, pray? No, you'll reply; becauſe the one, having loſt the ſenſe of hearing, can be no judge of ſounds, and the other, having loſt the ſenſe of ſeeing, can be no judge of colours; and ſo far you are right.

Now, what if I ſhould undertake to prove, that theſe young gentlemen are almoſt as improper judges of beauty, as the deaf perſon is of ſounds, or the blind one of colours? that they have either loſt entirely, or at leaſt greatly corrupted and depraved, thoſe fine and delicate feelings, which alone can diſtinguiſh true and genuine beauty, from that which is falſe and ſpurious. I don't pretend, my Dear, to be a philoſopher, and though I were, I know it would be extremely improper to entertain you with abſtruſe and refined ſpeculations, which, perhaps, you could not underſtand, or, if you did, could be of no real uſe to you in the conduct of life. But this, I imagine, is a thing which is obvious to common ſenſe; and, beſides, it may be of ſervice to you, as it will teach you what opinion to form of theſe empty fellows, and to pay no greater deference to their judgment than it deſerves.

Allow me, therefore, to aſk you a few queſtions,

queſtions, and you'll find, that your own anſwers will prove the point in diſpute. Firſt of all then, my Dear, do you think it poſſible for a perſon, who has loſt all ſenſe of chaſtity and modeſty himſelf, to be a proper judge of the expreſſions of theſe virtues in others? 'Tis abſolutely impoſſible. Can one who has loſt all purity of heart and manners, all delicacy of thought and ſentiment, who has little remains of humanity, compaſſion, generoſity, and benevolence, can ſuch an one, I ſay, be a proper judge of the genuine and natural ſymptoms of theſe excellent qualities in others? By no means. But I have already proved, that beauty conſiſts, in a great meaſure, in the expreſſion of theſe and the like virtues: and, if your young gentlemen are incapable to judge of thoſe virtues, they are equally incapable to judge of true beauty. What now, my Dear, is become of all your boaſted beauties of the town, and their ſmart and witty admirers? Why, vaniſhed, you ſee, into ſmoke. Like wax in the fire, they diſſolve and melt away at the touch of ſound reaſon and common ſenſe: 'tis a teſt and criterion, which they are not able to ſtand; the former are a parcel of artful cheats, and the latter a ſet of empty fools.

But, my Dear, do not miſtake me. I don't mean to inſinuate, by any thing I have

now

now ſaid, that the gentlemen you mention are entirely deſtitute of all theſe virtues; no: all I mean is, that the leſs virtuous they are the leſs capable are they to judge of true beauty; tho' indeed I ſhould imagine, from the wickedneſs of their lives, and the weakneſs of their judgment, that their ſhare of theſe virtues is very ſmall and inconſiderable, and even of that ſhare, inconſiderable as it is, they are likely ſoon to get rid, if they continue to live in the ſame courſe of licentiouſneſs and debauchery.

For it may be affirmed in general, that every deviation from the paths of virtue, every indulgence in criminal pleaſure, has a natural tendency to vitiate the taſte, to corrupt the heart, and to ſtifle and extinguiſh all the finer feelings and affections of the mind. A perſon immerſed in ſenſual pleaſure grows leſs and leſs rational every day: he degenerates by quick degrees, till at laſt he ſinks down into a mere animal, and loſes all reliſh for every thing that is virtuous, noble, and manly.

The truth is, theſe men of pleaſure, thoſe ſons of riot and debauchery, have never been remarkable for their ſocial virtues, but rather for the oppoſite vices. They are generally the moſt unfeeling and ſelfiſh beings in the world. All their care and labour, all their ſtudy and attention, all their time and fortune

fortune is employed in miniſtering to their own low and ſenſual appetites. They are wholly wrapt up within their own dear ſelves, regardleſs of the miſeries and calamities of their fellow creatures. They have no ears to hear, no eyes to ſee, no hands to relieve the wants and neceſſities of the poor and diſtreſſed. A friend may rot in jail, a brother may leave his country for debt, a ſiſter may go unportioned, nay (ſhocking and horrid to relate !) even a father, a mother may ſtarve for want, but theſe fine gentlemen, ſhall I call them, or rather thoſe monſters of vice and wickedneſs, will have their full ſwing of pleaſure. And let them have it : blind and unthinking mortals ! ere long a ruined fortune or a crazy conſtitution will bring them back to their right ſenſes, it will arouſe their now ſleeping but not extinguiſhed conſcience, and make them pay whole years of real pain and miſery for every fleeting moment of falſe pleaſure and imaginary delight.

You muſt excuſe, my Dear, this ſhort digreſſion, into which I have been inadvertently led, from an honeſt zeal and indignation againſt theſe debauched and abandoned fellows, the reproach and diſgrace of their own ſex, the bane and ruin of ours, who deſerve to be hiſſed and hooted, deſpiſed and contemned by every ſenſible and virtuous woman.

woman. After the picture I have drawn of them, I need not caution you, I dare ſay, againſt their company and converſation. To give you any advice on that head, were offering an affront to your underſtanding, or ſuſpecting your virtue. In my next letter I ſhall reſume the conſideration of thoſe virtues, which I have done little more than mentioned in this. Pleaſe to preſent my compliments to your aunt and all her family. I am

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXII.

My dear SOPHY,

AS I promiſed in my laſt, I now ſit down to explain and recommend to you the ſeveral virtues and good qualities, which are neceſſary to form the character of an accompliſhed woman. And the firſt I ſhall mention is, *temperance*; becauſe, of all the virtues, it is the moſt perſonal, the eaſieſt to be underſtood, the moſt neceſſary to be practiſed, and is, at the ſame time, the ſource

ſource and foundation of a great many others. Temperance, my Dear, conſiſts in regulating all the bodily appetites, and keeping them within proper bounds; in eating and drinking as much, and no more than is conducive to the health of the body.

It is impoſſible, however, to determine exactly, what this quantity is; ſometimes you may require more; ſometimes leſs will be ſufficient: though, I think, there is one general rule, by which you may eaſily judge whether or not you have exceeded the bounds of temperance. If, after a meal, you find yourſelf light, active, and chearful, and readily diſpoſed for any rational exerciſe, ſuch as reading, writing, drawing, or the like, you may then ſafely conclude, that you have obſerved the rules of temperance; but if, on the contrary, you find yourſelf heavy, ſleepy, and drouſy, and altogether unfit for any thing that requires thought and attention, you have then juſt reaſon to ſuſpect that you have exceeded the bounds of temperance: and if you carefully obſerve this rule, you will never be in danger of committing any great exceſſes.

But, beſides the quantity of your food, you ought likewiſe to attend to the quality of it; for it is certain, that the ſame ſort of food is not equally proper for every conſtitution. You will ſoon learn, by a little experience

experience and obſervation, what kinds of meat agree with your ſtomach, and what do not; and, when once you have learned this, you ought to ſtick to the one, and avoid the other, as much as you can. It will be impoſſible, however, to obſerve this maxim invariably. We cannot always follow our own taſte, but muſt frequently, in good manners, ſacrifice it to the general taſte of the company: for ſhe that cannot do ſo, upon occaſion, muſt never aſpire to the character of a pleaſant and agreeable companion; but muſt lay her account with being reckoned a ſtiff, formal, and unſociable kind of being.

But tho' you may ſometimes be obliged, in complaiſance, to eat ſuch kinds of meat as are not to your taſte and liking, and do not agree ſo well with your ſtomach, ſtill there is an eaſy remedy; 'tis only eating a little leſs than uſual, and then there will be no danger: thus you may eaſily prevent the bad effects of the quality, by the ſmallneſs of the quantity. In general, I would adviſe you to live on the moſt plain and ſimple food, and to abſtain from all rich and high ſauces, which only ſerve to create a falſe appetite, to inflame the blood, and, to load the body with a variety of bad humours.

I dare ſay you have heard the old proverb, "That every perſon is either a fool or a phyſician at forty;" by which, I think, is commonly underſtood, that every one, who has any tolerable ſhare of ſenſe and judgment, muſt, at that time of life, be thoroughly acquainted with the nature and ſtrength of her own conſtitution, and what kinds of food are moſt proper for it. But I don't know why they have fixed this period of wiſdom ſo late. Might not they have ſaid twenty as well as forty? for I'm afraid, ſhe that is a fool at twenty will not be very wiſe even at forty. At any rate it is paying but a poor compliment to human nature, to alledge, that we cannot learn the true art of life, till once the beſt part of it is paſt. But perhaps the meaning is only, that even the ſloweſt and dulleſt mortals muſt have acquired this neceſſary piece of knowledge at the age of forty, or elſe they never can; but that perſons of greater ſenſe and judgment may acquire it much ſooner: and, I hope, you will be one of this latter claſs; I hope, that, even before twenty, you will underſtand the nature of your own conſtitution ſo well as never to injure it, either by the quantity or quality of your food.

Temperance, my Dear, is the beſt preſervative of health, and conſequently of beauty,

beauty, which too commonly go hand-in-hand; for tho' there may be health without beauty, yet it is abſolutely impoſſible, that there can be any beauty without health. When the body is exhauſted and emaciated, and the face pale, wan, and meagre, with ſickneſs, there can be no expreſſion in the eyes and features, and therefore no beauty. I verily believe, that nineteen in twenty of the diſeaſes, incident to the human body, are owing to intemperance. Were it not for intemperance, we ſhould have little occaſion for phyſick, which is chiefly employed in removing the bad effects of this vice; in clearing the body from thoſe crude and ſuperfluous humours, which proceed from luxury and exceſs. Thus *Phyſick* may be called a kind of *artificial intemperance*, and *temperance* a ſort of *natural Phyſick*.

It is true, there are ſome diſeaſes, which are owing to a natural weakneſs of conſtitution, to the noxious quality of the air, and perhaps to ſeveral other unavoidable cauſes; but even theſe may, in a great meaſure, be prevented, or at leaſt kept under and ſubdued, by a ſtrict and regular courſe of temperance. There are two remarkable ſtories to this purpoſe, related by the Spectator, a book which I have formerly recommended to you, and is well worth your peruſal. The one is of *Socrates*, an ancient philoſopher,

who, tho' he lived in Athens during a plague, that ſwept away great numbers of the inhabitants, yet never caught the leaſt infection; which the writers of thoſe times unanimouſly aſcribe to that uninterrupted temperance, which he always obſerved. The other of one Lewis Cornaro, a Venetian, who was of an infirm conſtitution, 'till about forty, when, by obſtinately perſiſting in an exact courſe of temperance, he recovered a perfect ſtate of health, which he continued to enjoy till he had paſſed his hundredth year, and at laſt died without pain or agony, like one who falls a ſleep. In the former inſtance, you ſee a diſeaſe ariſing from an external cauſe, entirely prevented by the force of temperance: in the latter, you obſerve a diſeaſe, perhaps a complication of diſeaſes, ſpringing from an internal cauſe, from the badneſs of the conſtitution itſelf, and which the unhappy, but brave ſufferer brought into the world with him, perfectly ſubdued and extirpated by the ſame means. In a word, were people to live according to the ſtrict rules of temperance; were they never to eat nor drink any more or leſs than nature requires, they would not only enjoy a better ſtate of health, but would likewiſe draw out their lives to a greater old age than moſt of them do now-a-days attain.

It muſt be confeſſed, however, that it is no eaſy matter preciſely to hit this golden mean of temperance. Not one in twenty, perhaps, has ſenſe enough to diſcern it, and for certain, not one in five hundred, (I believe I might have ſaid in five thouſand,) has reſolution enough to practiſe it. But the nearer any one approaches to it, ſo much the longer and happier will her life be, and the farther ſhe recedes from it, ſo much the ſhorter, and more miſerable will it prove.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to recommend to you too great an abſtinence, which doctor Green, our phyſician, has frequently told me is ſtill more dangerous than a little intemperance. For, though the latter naturally tends to load and overcharge the body with a variety of bad humours, yet theſe, he ſays, if they are not allowed to increaſe to too great a quantity, nor to mix too intimately with the blood, may be eaſily carried off by phyſick and a proper regimen; whereas the former deprives the body of its natural nouriſhment, dries and ſhrivels up the finer veſſels for want of a proper ſupply of juices, and waſtes and emaciates the whole habit to ſuch a degree, that, he aſſures me, it is almoſt out of the power of medicine to apply an effectual remedy.

However uncommon this error may be, yet I have known ſeveral young ladies run

into it; who obſerving the terrible havock which intemperance had made on the conſtitution of others, and fearing the bad effects of it on their own, put on a firm reſolution to obſerve the moſt rigid temperance. But unluckily they overſhot the mark, and by endeavouring to be ſtrictly temperate, they become too abſtemious; and thus did greater harm to their conſtitution than they poſſibly could have done, had they even indulged themſelves in a little intemperance.

Notwithſtanding all that I have ſaid, I muſt own it would be extremely hard, were every the leaſt deviation from the ſtrict rules of temperance to affect the health and impair the conſtitution. This were to render life wretched and unhappy indeed. For I think it is an old proverb, which I have either read or heard ſomewhere, that *the perſon who lives phyſically lives miſerably.* She, who in her exerciſe, food, and ſleep is perpetually afraid of exceeding, and trembles at the very thoughts of the bad effects that might flow from too great an indulgence, cannot poſſibly be happy: the real preſſure of the evils themſelves could hardly make her more miſerable, than does the imaginary proſpect.

But, happily for us, this is not the caſe. The rules of temperance are not ſo ſtrict and ſevere, nor is the violation of them ſo dangerous

generous and fatal. At one time we may eat a little more than enough, at another we may eat a little leſs. Thus we may correct the intemperance of yeſterday by the abſtinence of to-day: and ſupply the abſtinence of to-day by the indulgence of to-morrow. This is not only what we may do with ſafety; but, if I may believe our phyſician, what we really ought ſometimes to do in point of prudence: for he tells me, that it is very conducive to the health of the body, that it improves and ſtrengthens the conſtitution, and enables us the better to ſtruggle and combat with diſeaſes, when they come. Whereas, ſhould we always obſerve the moſt regular and rigid temperance, if at any time we happen to be ſeized with a diſtemper, the phyſician hardly knows what to do with us, or how to reſtore us to our former health and vigor. He cannot put us into a more ſtrict and temperate regimen, than we have already obſerved; ſo that he is deprived of one of the moſt gentle and effectual means of recovery; and is, therefore, obliged to have recourſe to other methods, more ſevere, diſagreeable, and dangerous.

Perhaps there may be ſome truth in what the doctor ſays; though I have mentioned it, not ſo much with a view to make you indulge yourſelf in any voluntary and unneceſſary exceſſes, as to reconcile you to

thoſe little irregularities, which you will frequently be obliged to comply with; and the bad effects of theſe you muſt always endeavour to correct by next day's abſtinence, or by exerciſe, which is another excellent preſervative of health, and without which all the temperance in the world will not do. But as this is a thing, to which moſt young ladies are ſufficiently inclined of their own accord, I need not ſpend any time in exhorting you to it.

But the poſt, my dear, is juſt a going, and therefore I muſt conclude. What I have further to add on this ſubject, you may expect to receive in my next. Farewell, my dear Sophy; may God almighty aſſiſt you in acquiring all the virtues of a good life, and particularly that of temperance. I ever am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXIII.

My dear SOPHY,

IN my laſt letter, you know, I endeavoured to explain the nature of temperance, and to excite you to the practice of it, from a regard to your own health. But, my Dear,

Dear, there is ſtill a higher and a nobler motive to the obſervance of this virtue. You are bound to obſerve it, not only from intereſt, but likewiſe from duty; not only as it is conducive to the health of your body; but alſo in obedience to the command of your Creator. He hath bleſſed you with a ſound and healthful conſtitution, and therefore it is your duty to preſerve it, as long as you can, in the ſame good condition; and never to weaken or impair it by luxury and intemperance.

This, my Dear, is a point, in which young people are apt to commit the moſt egregious miſtakes. They fondly imagine, that, becauſe heaven has endued them with a good conſtitution, they may therefore uſe the greater freedom with it; that they may indulge themſelves in every thing they pleaſe, and live as they liſt. Senſible and pious thought truly! or rather fooliſh and impious to the laſt degree! Becauſe heaven has been kind, muſt they therefore be ungrateful? muſt their gratitude diminiſh in proportion to the greatneſs of the favour they have received?

Suppoſe you were to receive ten thouſand pounds to your fortune, and your youngeſt ſiſter only two; are you on that account, to become leſs dutiful and obedient to your parents than ſhe? or leſs careful and prudent

in the management of your own affairs? If you did, methinks it would be a very good reaſon for their reſuming their ill-placed favour; and for taking from you what you did not deſerve, and had not ſenſe to manage.

And why may not the great Creator of all things, in his infinite wiſdom and juſtice, act in the ſame manner? Why may not he deprive thoſe of health and ſtrength, who, inſtead of making theſe valuable qualities ſubſervient to the intereſts of virtue and religion, employ them only in the ſervice of vice and wickedneſs? And who knows, but he poſſibly does ſo? or, rather, who knows, not that he actually does ſo? A cold, a fall, a thouſand unforeſeen accidents, will anſwer the purpoſe. Theſe, indeed, in the language of this world, are fooliſhly imputed to chance; but, in the language of heaven, they are juſtly aſcribed to providence. They are puniſhments, and deſerved puniſhments too, inflicted upon them, for their luxury, intemperance, and debauchery. The truth is, health and ſtrength of body are talents committed to our care and management, which we are not at liberty to ſquander and throw away as we pleaſe, but for which we muſt account as ſtrictly and ſeverely as for any other endowment whatever. Remember, therefore, my Dear, that in every act of intemperance, you are guilty not only of the

the greateſt folly, but likewiſe of the blackeſt ingratitude, and the moſt daring impiety. And I don't know but thoſe, who ſhorten their lives by intemperance, are as a criminal in the ſight of God, as thoſe who put an immediate end to them by more violent means. For, if a perſon ſwallow a draught of mortal poiſon, and knowing it to be ſuch, where is the difference whether it produces its effect in thirty minutes or in thirty years? Does this alter the nature of the crime, or free the criminal from the guilt of ſelf-murder? In the judgment, perhaps, of ſhort-ſighted mortals it may; but whether or not it does ſo in the eye of the all-ſeeing and impartial Judge of the Univerſe, is at leaſt a queſtion.

And yet, is not intemperance a deadly poiſon, that rankles in the veins, and, however ſlow in its operations, is nevertheleſs certain and infallible in its effects? It gradually undermines and ruins the conſtitution, and brings many an one, in the flower of their age, to an untimely and unexpected death. Nine tenths, I dare ſay, of the human ſpecies fall a ſacrifice to this fell deſtroyer. War, famine, peſtilence, and old age, joined together, may ſlay their thouſands; but intemperance, alone and by itſelf, ſlays its ten thouſands.

As therefore, my Dear, you would wiſh to arrive at a good old age, at that full pe-

riod of life, which nature and the author of nature intended you ſhould reach, you muſt take particular care never to fall into this dangerous and pernicious vice of intemperance.

What a ſilly and ridiculous apology is it, which the luxurious and intemperate generally make for each other. "Poor man, "ſay they, of ſuch an one, he rather "drinks too hard, lives too high, and is "ruining his conſtitution as faſt as he can; "but he is a good innocent ſoul, and does "harm to nobody but himſelf." What! does harm to nobody but himſelf! groſs and ſtupid nonſenſe! he does harm to—all the world, both by the pernicious influence of his bad example, which may, and probably will, continue to operate, when he is dead and gone, and as he likewiſe diſqualifies himſelf for performing the duties of ſocial life. Was he born for himſelf alone? If he was, then let him be excluded and cut off from all ſocial intercourſe and correſpondence; let him be ſhut up in ſome lonely cell, and condemned to perpetual ſolitude and retirement. But if he was not; if he was born for ſociety, then let him remember that he is bound to contribute all that lies in his power to the happineſs and welfare of his fellow-creatures; that there is a large catalogue of ſocial duties which he is obliged

ed to perform, and which he connot neglect without the greateſt injuſtice and impiety. Has he no family to maintain? no ſon to educate? no daughter to portion? Has he no parents to ſuccour and comfort? no poor ſiſter or brother to relieve? no diſtreſſed friend to aſſiſt? Has he no poſt, civil or military, to attend? no trade or employment to mind? Or, if he is ſuch a ſelfiſh, ſolitary, and uſeleſs being as to have none of all theſe, ſtill is he not bound to ſhew a good example to the reſt of the world? If he has not courage and reſolution enough to perform any of the duties of ſocial life himſelf, is he not obliged, at leaſt, to excite and animate others to the performance of them?

But, my Dear, the truth of it is, theſe luxurious and intemperate ſots have all the duties I have now mentioned and many more to perform; but they have ſomething elſe to mind, which to them is more intereſting and important; they have their own dear bodies to cram and pamper, or rather to ruin and deſtroy; they have their own baſe, low, and groveling appetites to gratify; and to the gratification of theſe they will ſacrifice every virtue, private, public, and divine. What is it to them, how a father, a mother, a ſiſter, or a brother lives, if they live happily themſelves. They were made, they think, or at leaſt they live as if they

they were made for themſelves only, and therefore they will not be diſturbed with any care or concern about others. Wife and family, friends and relations, may periſh, if they will, for them, but they muſt, and they will enjoy their pleaſures. Thus they doze away their whole lives in eating, drinking, and ſleeping; in a continued courſe of animal gratifications; a ſtate of the groſſeſt ſtupidity and lethargy, hardly one degree above the brute creation.

But, my Dear, I find I am forgetting myſelf; I am inſenbly got into the deſcription of a male inſtead of a female character: for, I believe, it will be allowed even by the men themſelves, that however many originals of this picture may be found in their ſex, yet there are few, if any, to be found in ours, except among the very dregs and refuſe of it. Would to God the ſame might be ſaid of theirs! But I'm afraid it cannot; I'm afraid, that not only among the meaneſt and loweſt of mankind, but even among the higheſt and moſt honourable (if riches and titles can confer that dignity) there are many, too many, who may juſtly claim this character as their own.

This, however, I don't mention, in order to inſpire you with a high opinion of your own ſex, nor a low opinion of the other; but only to ſhew you, that, as intemperance is a very

very uncommon vice among women of a polite and genteel education, you ought therefore to ſhun it with the greater care; not only as it is wicked and immoral, but likewiſe as it is low, baſe and diſhonourable. I might mention many other arguments to perſuade you to the practice of temperance; but, as I believe you are as little inclined to the oppoſite vice, as any young lady in England, I hope what I have already ſaid, will be fully ſufficient. Your papa, your brothers and ſiſters join me in wiſhing you all manner of happineſs. Pleaſe to offer my kind compliments to your aunt and the reſt of the family. I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXIV.

My dear SOPHY,

MY time, for ſome months paſt, has been ſo entirely engroſſed with company and buſineſs, that I have been obliged, in ſome meaſure, to interrupt my epiſtolary corre-

correſpondence. But now being ſomewhat more at leiſure, I ſhall reſume the ſubject of your education.

In my two laſt letters, you know, I endeavoured to explain to you, as well as I could, the nature of temperance, and to convince you of the great utility and importance of that virtue. In this I ſhall give you my ſentiments of another virtue, which is no leſs, or, rather, which is infinitely more neceſſary; nay, I will venture to ſay, which is the moſt neceſſary and indiſpenſable of all others, and without which, wit, beauty, ſenſe, knowledge, and every other female accompliſhment, are not only uſeleſs, but even pernicious and deſtructive.

You will eaſily gueſs, my Dear, that the virtue I mean is chaſtity, the greateſt glory and ornament of our ſex, and what moſt effectually recommends us to the love and eſteem of the other. Perhaps, I may be accuſed of indelicacy in entertaining a lady, ſo very young as you are, with a diſcourſe on ſuch a tender ſubject; tho', I think, the character I bear as your mother, and conſequently the concern I muſt have for your happineſs, may well free me from any imputation of that kind: for I don't ſee how any thing can be called indelicate, which a virtuous mother can write to a virtuous daughter. Beſides, as it will be allowed to be

be extremely difficult, and perhaps even impoſſible, to fix the preciſe time when a young lady ſhould receive inſtructions on this head, every mother of conſequence is left, in a great meaſure, to follow her own judgment; and, I muſt confeſs, it is my opinion, that it is much better to be a whole year too early, than one day too late: the inconveniences of the former method, if indeed there be any, are very trifling and inconſiderable, but the bad effects of the latter are always dangerous, and frequently fatal and irreparable.

Young as you are, my Dear, you cannot be ignorant of what I mean by the virtue of chaſtity; and therefore I ſhall obſerve the rules of delicacy ſo far, as not to explain the nature of it more particularly. Allow me only to mention a few things, which may ſerve to convince you of its ineſtimable value: and to give you a few plain directions, by the obſervance of which, you may eaſily preſerve it pure and untainted.

Whilſt a young lady is poſſeſſed of this virtue, ſhe is bleſt with the approbation of her own conſcience, beloved and careſſed by her friends and relations, eſteemed and reſpected by all her acquaintance. But if, by ſome unlucky and fatal accident, ſhe is once deprived of this precious jewel, that moment ſhe loſes all inward peace and tranquility

quility of mind; ſhe is forſaken and abandoned by her neareſt friends and relations; ſhe is deſpiſed and contemned, hiſſed and hooted by all the world. Perhaps the humane and good-natured may pity her misfortunes, but ſeldom, or never, relieve her diſtreſſes: the rigidly virtuous and ſevere conſign her over, without reluctance, to inſtant and irretrievable ruin; the worthleſs part of the male ſex ridicule and laugh at her; and the abandoned part of the female hail her a ſiſter of their own; and, with helliſh and fiend-like joy, exult in the happy thoughts of having gained another proſelyte to the ways of vice and wickedneſs. What a terrible, what a horrid downfal is this! fallen headlong from the higheſt ſummit of honour, wealth, and happineſs, to the loweſt depth of diſgrace, poverty, wretchedneſs, and utter deſtruction!

And yet, my dear, great as this downfal is, it has been the fate of ſeveral young ladies, bleſt with all the advantages you enjoy, and, perhaps, with many more; but all their faireſt hopes, all their fineſt proſpects, were, at once, blaſted and deſtroyed by one falſe ſtep, the loſs of their chaſtity; for, this loſt, every thing that is dear and valuable to a woman, is loſt along with it; the peace of her own mind, the love of her friends, the eſteem of the world, the enjoyment

ment of preſent pleaſure, and all hopes of future happineſs, at leaſt in this life.

How many hundreds, my Dear, (I might ſay thouſands) of wretched and forlorn creatures are there in London, who have been ruined and undone by this means! aſhamed to ſhew their faces in public, when ſome of them might have been ſparkling in a front box at a play, or dancing a minuet in a polite aſſembly, and all of them living in honour: pining and almoſt ſtarving with poverty, when they might have been enjoying plenty and affluence: ſinking into the grave, oppreſſed with loathſome and mortal diſeaſes, when by preſerving their chaſtity, they might have preſerved their health and happineſs.

You knew, my Dear, the once happy, but now wretched, miſs Grey. She was poſſeſſed of wit, beauty, ſenſe, knowledge, character, and fortune, in as high a degree, as moſt young ladies in England; but ſhe was———my heart bleeds when I think on her miſerable fate——ſhe was decoyed, deceived, and at laſt abandoned by a perfidious and inhuman villain. Baniſhed from her father's houſe, deſerted by her friends, ſhunned by her acquaintance, and thrown on the wide world, what could ſhe do? or whither could ſhe go? Poverty, ſhame, infamy and diſgrace, in their moſt hideous

ous and ugly forms, ſtared her in the face, and drove the poor deſponding and diſtracted creature into a courſe of life, at the very thoughts of which ſhe would once have ſhuddered with horror. Her father ſtript her of her fortune, the world deprived her of her character, her wit degenerated into obſcenity, her beauty was changed into deformity, and her ſenſe and knowledge ſerved only to render her more dextrous and expert in the ways of vice and wickedneſs. At laſt, wearied and worn out with a life of lewdneſs and debauchery, ſhe fled to the Magdalen-houſe, where, I am told, ſhe is now endeavouring to waſh out the guilt of her former crimes, by her tears and repentance, and preparing to enter the world afreſh, in the humble character of a ſervant; for I am well aſſured, that her friends are reſolved never to ſee her more, nor to afford her any relief or aſſiſtance. Thus ſhe, who might have been the miſtreſs of an honorable and wealthy family herſelf, is now condemned to be one of the meaneſt of ſervants: ſhe, who long ere this time, might have been ſitting at the head of a ſplendid table, receiving the compliments and civilities of all the company, muſt now be doomed, perhaps, to do the low drudgery of a dirty ſcullion. Hard and cruel reverſe of fortune! or rather ſad and fatal effects

of

of vice; for all this load of calamities is brought upon her head, not by the caprice of fortune, but by her own folly and indiſcretion; and by one ſingle act of folly too, by the loſs of chaſtity: this the ſource of all her miſeries! this the fountain of all her woes! to this ſhe ought juſtly to aſcribe all the hardſhips ſhe has already ſuffered, and the long train of misfortunes which ſtill lie before her. Thus, for a ſhort moment of falſe and imaginary pleaſure, ſhe muſt pay a long, tedious life of real pain, ſorrow, and ſuffering. In this picture, my Dear, which is as true as it is terrible, you ſee the dangerous and deſtructive conſequences of lewdneſs and debauchery: tremble at the very thoughts of ſuch an abominable vice; and learn, from the folly and miſery of others, to be wiſe, virtuous, and happy yourſelf.

Don't imagine, my Dear, that what I have now ſaid is only my own private opinion; no: it is, and ever has been, the opinion of the wiſe and good, in all ages and nations of the world. In ſome particular countries eſpecially, this virtue of chaſtity has been held in ſuch high repute and eſtimation, that rather than loſe it, or ſurvive the loſs of it, ſome have even choſen to be deprived of life itſelf.

It is reported of one Lucretia, a Roman Lady, that, having been raviſhed by Sextus, eldeſt ſon to Tarquin, the king of that country, ſhe took a dagger in her hand; and, after having publickly exhorted her relations to revenge her injury on the barbarous raviſher, ſhe plunged it in her boſom, at once putting an end to her life and to her diſgrace. And ſuch was the opinion, which the Romans entertained of the heinous nature of this crime, as well of the fatal conſequences which followed the commiſſion of it, that the whole nation roſe in arms, and not only dethroned the king and baniſhed the royal family, but even, if I may ſpeak ſo, baniſhed kings in general, making a decree, that, for the future, no king ſhould ever ſway the ſceptre over the Roman people, but that their government, inſtead of a monarchy, ſhould thenceforth become a republic.

I dare ſay, my Dear, you have heard the common obſervation, that chaſtity is as neceſſary and ornamental in a woman, as courage is in a man: but, in fact, it is infinitely more ſo. For, though perhaps a coward may be as contemptible among the men, as a proſtitute is among the women, ſtill there is this material difference between the two caſes, that if a man loſe his character for want of courage, in one inſtance, he

he may, by ſome extraordinary effort of valour, recover it another; but a woman's character once loſt, can never be regained: like a fallen ſtar, ſhe ſits to riſe no more. Not floods of tears, not whole years of ſorrow and repentance, not the moſt conſtant practice of all the other virtues of a good life, not even the moſt rigid obſervance of the rules of chaſtity for the future, nothing will avail: they can never reſtore her loſt reputation, nor replace her in the rank of pure veſtals. And this ſingle conſideration, methinks, were it but deeply impreſſed on the minds of young ladies, might of itſelf be ſufficient to preſerve their chaſtity incorrupted, and to make them tremble and ſhudder at the moſt diſtant apprehenſions of loſing a treaſure, which is ſo precious in the poſſeſſion, and ſo irrecoverable when loſt. But, as our beſt and firmeſt reſolutions are frequently overpowered by the ſtrength and number of temptations, I ſhall point out ſome of the principal incentives to lewdneſs, which you ought carefully and conſtantly to avoid.

Firſt of all then, my Dear, let me adviſe you to ſhun all kind of luxury and intemperance, which is doubly an enemy to this virtue of chaſtity. For, it not only inflames the blood, and raiſes the paſſions: but, at the

the ſame time, darkens and clouds the mind, and renders it leſs capable to reſiſt and regulate the inferior appetites. It debaſes and corrupts the heart: it gives us too ſtrong a reliſh for the pleaſures of ſenſe, and too great a diſguſt for thoſe of a rational nature. It takes off from that purity of thought, that delicacy of ſentiment, that fine ſenſibility, if I may ſpeak ſo, which recoils and ſtarts back at the leaſt appearence of any thing that is groſs, indecent or immoral. But temperance has a quite contrary effect: it keeps all the inferior appetites in due ſubordination to the direction and government of reaſon, and preſerves the faculty of reaſon itſelf clear and ſtrong; clear, to perceive the moſt diſtant approaches of danger; and ſtrong, to repel the moſt violent aſſaults.

Shun likewiſe, my Dear, with the ſame care and diligence, every thing that can offend a modeſt eye, or a chaſte ear; all indecent pictures and repreſentations, all lewd and immodeſt language. Indeed, the firſt part of this advice, it will be no eaſy matter to obſerve; for it is a melancholy truth, that the dining and drawing-rooms of many people, even ſometimes of the moſt virtuous and religious, are adorned, or rather diſgraced, with ſuch paintings and engravings, as are fit only for houſes of bad fame.

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What motive theſe people can have for buying and expoſing to view ſuch unſeemly pictures, I cannot well conceive. If it be to follow the faſhion, 'tis but a poor apology. To follow the faſhion in things that are good, is commendable; to follow the faſhion in things indifferent, is adviſeable; but to follow it in things that are immoral, is altogether inexcuſable: to be ſingular in ſuch a caſe, is to be virtuous. If it be to gratify their own humour, 'tis but paying a ſorry compliment to themſelves, as it is but a poor ſign either of the elegance of their taſte, or the goodneſs of their hearts. If it be to improve the taſte of their children in the polite arts, 'tis certainly a very dangerous, and, in my opinion, a very ineffectual method: for even ſuppoſing it could improve their taſte, ſtill it is at the expence of their virtue; and this is ſuch a fooliſh and impious exchange, as methinks, no wiſe and good perſon would chuſe to make. Beſides, it deſerves to be well conſidered, whether any thing can properly be ſaid to improve the taſte, that has a natural tendency to corrupt the heart.

At any rate, might not the ſame end be as well anſwered by pictures of a virtuous nature, calculated to convey ſome uſeful leſſon of morality. Would not the repreſentation of a dutiful ſon, boldly expoſing

himſelf to imminent danger, and even to certain death, to protect the life of an aged father from the mortal ſtab of an inſidious aſſaſſin; or the repreſentation of a beautiful daughter, nobly foregoing all the vanities and gaieties of life, and rejecting the warmeſt addreſſes of her moſt importunate lovers, to attend upon a ſick and diſtreſſed mother: I ſay would not ſuch repreſentations as theſe be as well adapted to improve the taſte of young people, as your naked Venus's, Apollo's, or Cupid's? The deſign, at leaſt, would be as natural, and I don't ſee why the execution might not be rendered as perfect.

Such indecent pictures, my Dear, you will never ſee at your aunt's, nor, you may be aſſured, at your papa's neither, when you come to pay us a viſit in the country; and therefore, perhaps, it may be deemed impertinent in me to find fault with the taſte and conduct of other people; and, to be ſure, it would be ſo, were it not, that you are in danger of ſuffering, nay, that you certainly muſt ſuffer, by this bad taſte of theirs. For, in the courſe of your viſiting, it will be impoſſible for you to avoid ſeeing many pictures, which, inſtead of being expoſed to the view, ſhould be induſtriouſly concealed from the eyes of young perſons.

Perhaps, theſe people may reply, that, if you don't chuſe to ſee their pictures, you may forbear

forbear the viſit, and ſtay at home. But this is a very ſilly anſwer: 'tis rather the language of pique than of reaſon; were we to forſake our friends on account of every little circumſtance that offends us, we ſhould be obliged to live in perpetual ſolitude and retirement. When therefore, my Dear, you happen to viſit in ſuch families, let me adviſe you to be very cautious and circumſpect: carefully keep off your eyes from all indecent and indelicate pictures: for, beſides the danger immediately ariſing to yourſelf, I ſhould imagine, that any modeſt young lady would be aſhamed to be catched in the very act of looking at them.

Such a conduct will not only be the moſt prudent in itſelf, but will likewiſe be a tacit reprimand to the maſter or miſtreſs of the family; for, as theſe people generally pretend to be perſons of taſte, you cannot mortify their pride more effectually, than by overlooking and deſpiſing what they reckon their curioſities; and this mortification, at leaſt their pride and vanity ſhould always receive from every modeſt and diſcreet lady.

With regard to the other part of the advice, there is no leſs danger. It is true, you will never hear any lewd or indecent language from the chaſte and modeſt part of your own ſex; and with ſuch only, I hope, you will converſe. Nor, indeed, will you ever hear

any thing of this kind from the ſenſible and virtuous part of the other ſex: but of theſe, how inconſiderable is the number? What a ſmall proportion do theſe bear to the fooliſh and the vicious? to the motley herd of empty fops, vain fribblers, ſhallow coxcombs, and abandoned rakes? who, recommended, forſooth, either by their rank or fortune, or ſupported, perhaps, by mere impudence, intrude themſelves into almoſt every company, where they never fail to ſhock and offend the chaſte and delicate ear, by their lewd and immodeſt language.

'Tis hard to ſay, whether theſe empty fellows are moſt the objects of pity, contempt, or deteſtation. Pitiful wretches they certainly are, for they have no ſubject of converſation but one, and that is obſcenity; ſtop their mouths on this ſubject, and you ſtop them entirely: they can neither think nor talk of any thing elſe. Contemptible dunces they muſt undoubtedly be reckoned, for, inſtead of being ſenſible of their own ignorance and ſtupidity, they think they are mighty learned and ingenious? whilſt they are very obſcene, they imagine they are very witty. Deteſtable miſcreants they muſt ſurely be accounted, for, not content with being lewd and immoral themſelves, they would have all the reſt of the world to follow their wicked example; by giving full vent to the

filthy

filthy overflowings of their own corrupted hearts, they endeavour to corrupt and pollute the yet untainted hearts of others.

Theſe, my Dear, are the peſts and plagues of all genteel company, from which, therefore, they ought to be expelled and baniſhed without form or ceremony; without regard to rank, family, fortune, or any other conſideration whatever: let them firſt learn to behave like gentlemen, and then they may expect to be treated as ſuch.

You will think, my Dear, that I expreſs myſelf with ſome warmth and ſeverity againſt theſe debauched and abandoned rakes; and no wonder that I do: for I have frequently been obliged myſelf, and I have known many others obliged to leave ſeveral agreeable companies, merely to ſhun their rude and impertinent language.

Such fellows as theſe you are in no danger of ſeeing at your aunt's: ſhe has too much good ſenſe and too great a regard for decency and decorum, ever to admit into her houſe any ſuch viſitants, however dignified by their titles, riches, employments, or any other external circumſtances.

But ſuch I'm afraid you may ſometimes ſee in the courſe of your viſiting; in all which caſes, let me adviſe you, my Dear, to keep the ſtricteſt guard upon every part of your behaviour. If any of theſe fellows be-

gin to talk in a lewd and immodeſt ſtrain ſeem at firſt not to underſtand them; but if they perſiſt in their impertinence, without being checked or reſtrained by the miſtreſs of the family, then leave the company outright.

Should the lady, at next meeting, appear to be diſpleaſed at your abrupt departure, tell her that you had my orders not only for what you then did, but alſo for behaving in the ſame manner on every occaſion of the like nature: and that I think every miſtreſs of a family is as accountable for the converſation ſhe affords to her gueſts, as for any other part of the entertainment.

I don't ſay, that ſhe has a right of commanding the company to talk on any one particular ſubject; no: this would be the height of arrogance and preſumption, and altogether inconſiſtent with the rules of politeneſs and good-breeding. But this I ſay, that, let the ſubject of converſation be what it will, it is her duty to obſerve, that it be always kept within bounds of modeſty and decorum; and that, whenever it begins to exceed theſe bounds, ſhe may and ought to correct the preſumptuous offender, and to remind him, that he is in the company of virtuous ladies, and not of abandoned proſtitutes.

After what I have ſaid, my Dear about ſhunning the converſation of theſe debauch-

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ed rakes, it were needleſs to give you any further caution about ſhunning their company; which, I dare ſay, you will always carefully do, except when you are neceſſarily drawn into it in the common courſe of viſiting; though were you ſure of meeting one of theſe fellows in any particular family, I ſhould think that a very good reaſon for delaying your viſit till another time. With regard to the company of men in general, I may poſſibly give you my ſentiments in ſome other letter.

Another great preſervative of chaſtity is, carefully to abſtain from reading all plays, novels, or romances, that have the leaſt tendency to corrupt and debauch the heart. What theſe are I will not take upon me to ſay; for having never read any of them myſelf, I don't ſo much as know their names. But, as in this reſpect I have already adviſed you to conduct yourſelf by the direction of your aunt, I need not be more particular.

I might mention ſeveral other methods, which are very conducive to the preſervation of chaſtity; but theſe will come to be conſidered more properly under the article of modeſty.

Before I conclude, however, let me entreat you, my dear Sophy, to implore the aid and aſſiſtance of Almighty God in this

and in every thing elſe you undertake, without which all your own endeavours will prove fruitleſs and ineffectual. And that he may be graciouſly pleaſed to bleſs you with chaſtity, and with all the other virtues of a good life, is the ſincere prayer of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your fond and affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

YOUR letters on temperance and chaſtity I received in due courſe. My aunt, I believe, who carefully inſpects every part of my conduct, will do me the juſtice to acknowledge, that I have always been pretty obſervant of both theſe virtues. The rules of temperance, I think, I have never tranſgreſſed in any material inſtance; and, I am ſure, I never had the leaſt inclination, nor ever diſcovered the leaſt propenſity to violate thoſe of chaſtity. But, I muſt confeſs at the ſame time, that till the receipt of

of your letters, I never underſtood the nature of theſe virtues ſo diſtinctly, nor was ſo fully convinced of their great value and importance. Your laſt letter, eſpecially, has made ſuch a deep impreſſion upon my mind, that methinks I could now ſacrifice every thing to the preſervation of my chaſtity: rather than loſe my honour, I would chearfully loſe my life.

Poor miſs Grey, Mamma, I remember extremely well, and had formerly heard ſome indiſtinct account of her misfortune; but never knew that her condition was ſo deplorable and deſperate, as you repreſent it. The ſhort but affecting hiſtory you wrote me of her miſerable fate, pierced me to the very heart, and made the tears guſh into my eyes: I am ſure I ſhall never forget it ſo long as I live.

But, my dear Mamma, what I have chiefly to beg of you at preſent, is, that you will be ſo good as to write me your ſentiments of the virtue of modeſty, which I think you gave me ſome reaſon to expect by what you ſaid in the cloſe of your laſt letter. I am the more anxious to have your opinion of this matter, as it is a ſubject, on which my aunt has lately lectured my couſin and me pretty ſeverely. She alledges, that we are very often faulty in this reſpect, but owns, at the ſame time, that our faults

ſeem chiefly to proceed from ignorance. This, however, ſhe will not allow to be a ſufficient apology; for though ignorance, ſhe ſays, be leſs criminal than impudence, yet it is far from being excuſable in young ladies of our age and education. Beſides, ſhe aſſures us, the world will be more apt to impute ſuch faults to want of modeſty than to want of ſenſe; for that, when the ſame action may proceed from different motives, few people have the humanity and good-nature to aſcribe it to the beſt. Pleaſe to give my duty to my papa, and my kind love to my ſiſters and brothers. My aunt preſents her compliments to you and the reſt of the family. I am,

My Dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

LETTER XXXVI.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My Dear SOPHY,

YOUR laſt letter, which I received a few weeks ago, gave me the greateſt ſatisfaction. I was particularly pleaſed to hear

hear you expreſs ſuch a noble reſolution, of preſerving your chaſtity pure and untainted. May God Almighty aſſiſt you in this, and in every other virtuous undertaking. Agreeably to my own promiſe, and in compliance with your deſire, I ſhall now give you my ſentiments of modeſty, and ſome other female virtues. Modeſty, my Dear, is the outward expreſſion of a pure and chaſte mind: and therefore, every word you ſpeak, every action you perform, every geſture of your body, every look of your eyes, every part of your dreſs; in fine, every thing, by which the inward diſpoſitions of the mind can be expreſſed and diſcovered, comes under the regulation of this virtue.

Modeſty, as it relates to dreſs, has already been conſidered under that article: as it relates to converſation, it has been, in ſome meaſure, explained, in treating of that and the ſubject of chaſtity. After the advice I then gave you, to ſhun the lewd and immodeſt converſation of others, it would certainly be unneceſſary to uſe any other arguments to diſſuade you from running into the ſame error yourſelf. There is ſomething in this practice ſo baſe and vulgar, as well as ſo indecent and abominable, that I will not even ſuppoſe you capable of a thing, at once ſo unpolite and immoral.

But, my Dear, modeſty regards not only the matter of your converſation, but alſo the manner of it; not only what you ſay, but likewiſe how you ſay it. And, indeed, this is ſuch an eſſential part of modeſty, that it frequently appears more viſibly in the manner of expreſſing a thing, than in the nature of the thing itſelf. There is lady Langley; ſhe returns thanks for a favour, and to people as good as herſelf too, with ſuch a careleſs and indifferent, and ſometimes indeed with ſuch a haughty and over-bearing air, that a by-ſtander, who only obſerves her manner, would be apt to conclude, that ſhe was rather beſtowing one upon ſome of her dependants, or giving orders to her footman: whilſt miſs Boothby, on the other hand, even beſtows a favour with that engaging and winning addreſs, with that humility and condeſcenſion, that one would really imagine, ſhe was rather receiving, than conferring an obligation.

Nothing, my Dear, is more inconſiſtent with modeſty, than to talk with a loud, ſhrill, and harſh tone of voice. This is very unbecoming, even in a man, but much more in a woman, and moſt of all in a young woman, whoſe accent ſhould be low, ſmooth, and gentle, an emblem of the inward ſoftneſs and delicacy of her mind. It is no leſs inconſiſtent with the rules of modeſty,

deſty, to talk in a poſitive and peremptory ſtrain. This is ſcarce tolerable, even when you are talking of things that cannot be contradicted; but is abſolutely intolerable, when you are ſpeaking of matters that are of a doubtful nature, as indeed moſt ſubjects of converſation are. 'Tis the duty of a young lady to talk with an air of diffidence, as if ſhe propoſed what ſhe ſaid, rather with a view to receive information herſelf, than to inform and inſtruct the company.

Modeſty, my Dear, as it relates to geſture, is of a very extenſive nature; and, though its outward ſigns are not ſo eaſily perceived by vulgar and undiſcerning eyes, they are nevertheleſs moſt certain and infallible. I hope I ſhall not be conſidered as going out of my own depth, or as ſaying any thing above your comprehenſion, when I tell you that there is no paſſion or affection of the mind, which may not be expreſſed by ſome correſpondent motion of the body. I dare ſay, you may have ſeen ſomething of this kind at the play-houſe, in what they call dumb ſhow. I remember myſelf to have ſeen one actreſs ſing a ſong without the leaſt viſible motion, and another perfectly mute, ſtanding by, and endeavouring to humour and expreſs all the different

different paſſions contained in it, by ſuitable geſtures of the body.

But we need not have recourſe to the play-houſe for what we may ſee in the daily occurrences of common life. Whence is it that a bow in the male ſex, and a courteſy in the female, are always conſidered as marks of reſpect and eſteem? whence, but becauſe theſe poſtures of the body are naturally expreſſive of humility and ſubmiſſion? Nay, what is more common than to hear people ſay of ſuch an one, only by obſerving his gait and geſture, that he is a proud, haughty, and imperious fellow; of another, that he is a grave, ſober, and ſedate man; and of a third, that he is an empty, ſhallow, and conceited coxcomb; and ſo of others.

Now, my Dear, if this be the caſe with all the other paſſions and affections of the mind, why mayn't it be the ſame with modeſty too? The truth is, this virtue is expreſſed by a certain decent, graceful, and compoſed geſture, equally removed from the pert and forward air of impudence on the one hand, and the aukward and clumſy gait of ſheepiſhneſs on the other: and to teach you this graceful gait, ought to be the principal, if not the only end of dancing. As for thoſe ridiculous and fantaſtic figures in dancing, which either have no meaning at all, or ſerve only to ſhew into how many odd

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and unnatural poſtures the body may be thrown, they are quite below the notice of a gentlewoman, and are fit only for harlequins and mountebanks.

Modeſty, as it regards the countenance, and eſpecially the expreſſion of the eyes, is no leſs worthy of your attention, becauſe, perhaps, it appears more in this than in any one thing whatever. Young as you are, my Dear, you cannot be ignorant, that all the different paſſions of the mind may be painted and expreſſed in the countenance. Anger and meekneſs, joy and ſorrow, love and hatred, pride and humility, impudence and modeſty, have each a particular air of the face, naturally adapted to expreſs them; and whatever paſſion happens to be uppermoſt in the mind, the countenance will take its tincture, and complexion from thence. Thus joy is expreſſed by a pleaſing ſmile, ſorrow by a dejected look, pride by a ſupercilious frown, humility by an unaſſuming air, impudence by a wanton glance, modeſty by a chaſtiſed mien; and ſo of the reſt. And tho' I am no great friend to phyſiognomy, or the judging of people's characters by their looks, yet, I believe, there is ſomething in it. Tho' I know the face is ſometimes a falſe glaſs, ſtill I am perſuaded it is as often, and much oftner, a true one; and

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that the countenance is frequently a faithful picture of the mind.

Indeed, I can very well conceive why a woman of bad fame ſhould affect the look of innocence: becauſe it may the more effectually anſwer her purpoſe; nothing being ſo amiable, even in the eyes of the profligate and debauched themſelves, as true modeſty. But why a young lady of unſpotted virtue ſhould aſſume the look of impudence, is quite beyond my comprehenſion: the meaning of it (if it has any meaning at all) muſt be, that ſhe wants to get rid of her chaſtity as ſoon as poſſible. For my own part, I cannot eaſily figure to myſelf any other reaſon. If ſhe thinks, by this means, to give herſelf an air of ſpirit and vivacity, ſhe is greatly miſtaken; for ſpirit and vivacity are as different from impudence, as any two things can well be.

But, my Dear, not only does the countenance receive a tranſient tincture from the paſſion, which happens, for the preſent, to be moſt prevalent in the mind: what is ſtill more, if we indulge that paſſion frequently and habitually, it will come at laſt to give the countenance ſuch a particular caſt and air, as it will not be in our power to alter or throw off at pleaſure, but will continue fixed and invariable through our whole lives; and will go a great way towards determining

terming our character, at leaſt with the generality of the world, who have no other opportunity to judge of our tempers, but from our looks and appearance; ſo that we ſhall paſs for proud or humble, peeviſh or good-natured, impudent or modeſt, juſt as our countenance is expreſſive of any of theſe diſpoſitions.

Thus, you ſee, my Dear, there is, at leaſt, ſome truth in phyſiognomy; and that it concerns every young lady to be very careful of her looks, ſince her character depends as much upon theſe as upon any other part of her behaviour. The only advice I can give you in this caſe is, never to entertain any lewd or immodeſt thought in your breaſt, and then you will never be in danger of expreſſing any thing of that nature in your countenance. If you would wiſh to have a modeſt look, you muſt endeavour to have a modeſt mind; for without the latter, the former can hardly exiſt.

I know it is, now-a-days, conſidered as a ſign of ruſticity and ignorance to allow the countenance to be an index to the mind, or to expreſs thoſe particular paſſions with which it is affected. A certain unmeaning uniformity of face is now ſtudied and practiſed as the height of politeneſs and good-breeding, or rather to have ſuch an abſolute command over our features, as to be

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able, on occaſion, to aſſume any appearance; to ſmile when we are not pleaſed, and to ſigh when we are not ſorry; in a word, to regulate our looks, not by the feelings of our own minds, but by the forms of civility and good-manners.

All that can be ſaid for this method, is, that it is one of the many ſubterfuges of vice and wickedneſs. A virtuous perſon has no occaſion to uſe it; for as ſhe never entertains any thoughts but what are chaſte and innocent, ſhe has no intereſt in concealing them; ſhe is not afraid to let her face ſpeak the language of her heart. But, if people will indulge vicious paſſions and corrupt affections, they are certainly in the right to conceal them as much as poſſible; for, tho' it will not render them more virtuous, it will, at leaſt, give them more the appearance of virtue, and make them more tolerable and agreeable companions.

An envious perſon for inſtance, when ſhe hears of the happy marriage of any of her acquaintance, ſmiles and rejoices; not becauſe ſhe is really glad: on the contrary, it is fifty to one, but ſhe is inwardly vexed and uneaſy; for envy is always vexed at the happineſs of others; but ſhe ſmiles, becauſe it is the faſhion, and ſhe would not be unfaſhionable for all the world: no, not even to gratify her favourite paſſion. On the other hand,

hand, when ſhe hears of any of her friends having met with a diſappointment, ſhe ſighs and laments; not becauſe ſhe is ſincerely ſorry, no: that is very improbable, and indeed next to impoſſible; for the misfortunes and diſappointments of others, is the moſt delicious feaſt that envy can enjoy: but ſhe ſighs, becauſe it is the mode, and ſhe would not be ſingular on any account; rather than be ſingular ſhe would almoſt take the trouble of being virtuous, were it not that, by the help of hypocriſy, ſhe can eaſily ſave appearances.

The truth is, my Dear, the countenance of ſuch a perſon is ſo far from being an index to her mind, that it is rather a maſk to conceal it. When ſhe ſeems to be well pleaſed, it is ten to one but ſhe is ſorry; and when ſhe ſeems to be ſorry, it is as probable that ſhe is well pleaſed: her ſighs and ſmiles ſhe puts on, juſt as ſhe does her birth-day dreſs, merely becauſe it is the faſhion; and ſhe can lay them both aſide with the ſame eaſe. Thus you ſee, my Dear, that this great refinement in the modern method of polite education, is no more than a refinement in vice; it is only a cloak to cover the vicious paſſions and depraved affections of a bad heart, from which, I pray to God, that you may ever be kept free.

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In a word, my Dear, (for I muſt repeat it to you again) the only way to have a modeſt look, a modeſt gait, or a modeſt behaviour in general, is to have a modeſt mind. Without this, all the formality, gravity, and grimace in the world, will ſignify nothing; for, tho' by this means you may be able to impoſe upon the thoughtleſs and ignorant, yet the ſenſible and judicious obſerver will always ſee thro' the maſk, and perhaps but deſpiſe you the more for your hypocritical ſolemnity. But, my Dear, do not miſtake me. While I adviſe you to be modeſt, I do not adviſe you to be ſheepiſh and baſhful; far from it. Modeſty and ſheepiſhneſs, however alike they may be in appearance, are as different in their nature, as any two things can well be. A modeſt perſon will not talk too much or too high in company, becauſe ſhe knows it is improper: a ſheepiſh perſon will hardly talk at all, or at leaſt not ſo as to be underſtood, becauſe ſhe is afraid. A modeſt perſon looks with a decent aſſurance: a ſheepiſh one is abaſhed, and bluſhes at ſhe don't know what. A modeſt perſon will never contradict the general taſte of the company, unleſs it be inconſiſtent with decency and good-manners: a ſheepiſh perſon will hardly contradict it, even when it is. The one acts from principle, the other from mere inſtinct: the one is guided by the rules of right

right reaſon and therefore is conſiſtent in her conduct: the other is guided by no rules at all, and conſequently has no uniformity of character.

This ſheepiſhneſs naturally leads to, and commonly ends in, a kind of falſe modeſty, which is ſuch an extreme degree of complaiſance, ſuch a yielding ſoftneſs of nature, as is not able to refuſe any thing. A perſon of this character has no choice of her own: ſhe reſigns her own judgment, and is content to be directed by the judgment, or rather by the humour and caprice, of other people. When any thing is propoſed, ſhe never examines whether it be reaſonable, but only whether it be faſhionable; and if it is, ſhe is ſatisfied: ſhe aſks no more: ſhe will comply with it, let the conſequence be what it will. She is aſhamed to refuſe any thing that is faſhionable, however vicious; or to do any thing that is unfaſhionable, however virtuous. Should it ever become unfaſhionable to go to church, to be obedient to parents, or even to obſerve the rules of modeſty, it is ten to one but ſhe would be aſhamed to perform any of theſe duties; ſo that, from an exceſs of modeſty, ſhe perhaps might be tempted to violate the laws of modeſty itſelf.

But, my Dear, this is not modeſty; it is weakneſs. Modeſty does not conſiſt in following the faſhion, but in following reaſon; not

not in complying with the humour of the company in every inſtance, but only in as far as is conſiſtent with virtue and good manners. If you go by any other rule, you can never be ſure of being in the right, but you will always be in danger of being in the wrong; and if you ſhould happen to go right by chance, you are more obliged to the virtue of your companions, than to your own prudence; for had they been wicked enough to have led you aſtray, you would have been fooliſh enough to have followed them.

Let me therefore adviſe you, my Dear Sophy, carefully to guard againſt falſe modeſty, which is one of the greateſt enemies of virtue, and perhaps has betrayed young people into as many vices as the moſt abandoned impudence. Never be ſo extremely modeſt as to comply with any thing that is bad, how much ſoever it may be in vogue; nor ever be aſhamed to follow what is good, however ſingular and uncommon.

True modeſty, my Dear, is meant to be the preſerver, not the betrayer of your virtue: it will be a kind of guard and protection to your chaſtity; it will ſecure you from the rudeneſs and impertinence of the impudent and abandoned part of the other ſex. There is ſuch a dignity and majeſty in a modeſt behaviour, as never fails to command reſpect: it confounds and abaſhes even

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the moſt profligate, and makes them either aſhamed or afraid of giving vent to their low and obſcene ribaldry, when they are ſure it will be received with a bluſh or a frown, with contempt or averſion.

But if once a young woman is ſo fooliſh as to throw off this virgin delicacy, this ornament of her ſex; if once ſhe accuſtom her ears to hear, or her tongue to utter indecent and immodeſt language: ſhe may then expect to be inſulted and affronted by every rake ſhe meets. Every abandoned fellow will then think he has a right to ſay or do whatever he pleaſes in her company, and that ſhe, who has ſo little regard for modeſty in her converſation, has as little in her actions.

A thouſand ſchemes will then be formed, a thouſand ſnares will then be laid to betray and ruin her virtue; and if amidſt all theſe ſecret plots and open aſſaults, ſhe can preſerve it pure and untainted, ſhe muſt be doubly virtuous indeed; at leaſt ſhe muſt be poſſeſſed of more firmneſs of mind, of greater reſolution and perſeverance, than moſt young perſons enjoy. And ſhould ſhe even be happy enough to elude all the ſnares, and to repel all the aſſaults of the licentious and abandoned, yet they will never be brought to entertain a good opinion of her virtue. They will think that ſhe acts not from a

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love to virtue itſelf, but from pride, intereſt, convenience, or ſome other motive. And therefore ſhould ſhe be able to maintain her innocence for a while, ſtill ſhe will be in perpetual danger of loſing it: for ſo long as ſhe continues to be immodeſt, they will continue to be importunate; nor will they ever be perſuaded to give over their attempts on her chaſtity, till ſhe think proper to reform her conduct.

But, my Dear, from all theſe dangers, ſnares, and temptations, you may eaſily preſerve yourſelf, by a ſtrict obſervance of the rules of modeſty; by never allowing a ſingle expreſſion to be dropt in your company, that has the leaſt appearance of obſcenity, without teſtifying your diſlike and diſapprobation. If you obſerve this maxim invariably, you will never be expoſed to any inſults or affronts; for he muſt be an impudent fellow indeed, or (what perhaps theſe coxcombs will think a greater diſgrace) he muſt be a ſtupid fellow, that preſumes to take greater liberties, where he ſees even the very leaſt are denied him.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to recommend to you a ſtiff, formal, and preciſe behaviour, no: this is not modeſty; it is prudery, which is as far removed from modeſty on the one hand, as coquetry is on the other. Modeſty does not need any foreign

foreign gloſs to ſet it off: it appears moſt amiable in its own native colours. The prude affects an appearance of more modeſty than ſhe really has: the coquette affects an appearance of leſs. The former will not probably gain credit: the latter certainly will. The prude will not be believed to poſſeſs ſo much modeſty as ſhe pretends to, perhaps not even ſo much as ſhe actually has: the coquette will readily be allowed to have no more than ſhe ſeems, and poſſibly even leſs. Since ſhe is ſo very anxious to convince the world, that ſhe has little regard for modeſty, the world, if ſhe pleaſes, will be ſo complaiſant, as to believe that ſhe has none at all; whereas they will puniſh the preſumption of the prude, for putting on the appearance of more modeſty than ſhe has, by even ſuſpecting the reality of what ſhe actually poſſeſſes. The prude is ſo extremely nice and delicate, that ſhe is offended at every thing: the coquette is ſo very eaſy and indifferent, that ſhe is offended at nothing. The prude ſtartles at the moſt innocent expreſſions, as rude and indecent: the coquette hears what are really the moſt rude and indecent, without any concern. The prude has frequently a grave and demure look, when her heart is light and chearful: the coquette has frequently a gay and ſprightly countenance, when her

heart is heavy and ſorrowful. The prude is often ſilent, when ſhe ought to ſpeak: the coquette often ſpeaks, when ſhe ought to be ſilent. The prude frequently ſtays at home, when her heart is at the play or opera: the coquette frequently goes to the play or opera, when her heart is at home. In a word, the prude ſtudies to be ſingular; the coquette, to be faſhionable: the former wants to paſs for a lady of the moſt rigid virtue; the latter for an agreeable companion. The prude deſpiſes the coquette as a giddy fool: the coquette laughs at the prude as a conceited hypocrite; and the lady of true modeſty pities them both, as well-meaning, perhaps, but miſtaken creatures. And objects of pity they certainly are; for their error proceeds rather from the weakneſs of their heads than the badneſs of their hearts.

The one imagines, that a prude is the moſt ridiculous character in the world, and that therefore the farther ſhe is from it, ſo much the better: the other thinks the character of a coquette ſtill more contemptible, and endeavours to ſhun it with the ſame care. Hence the one naturally becomes a coquette, and the other a prude, not ſo much from a love to the character they have aſſumed, as from a hatred to the character they have avoided. Thus, like all fools, while

while they fly from one vice, they run into its oppoſite, never remembering, that, in this, as in moſt other caſes, virtue lies in the *golden mean*; that modeſty is the middle point between coquetry and prudery, both of which are equally ridiculous and contemptible.

But, my Dear, tho' the prude and the coquette be characters equally ridiculous, ſtill, it muſt be acknowledged, they are not equally dangerous. The prude has at leaſt the appearance of modeſty; but the coquette has not even that; and tho' there may be an appearance of virtue, where there is no reality, yet 'tis hardly poſſible there can be any reality where there is no appearance, or (what is worſe) where there is an appearance of vice: at leaſt the world will always judge ſo, becauſe it is only by appearances they can judge.

Hence it is, that a prude frequently preſerves her reputation, after having loſt her innocence; whilſt a coquette ſometimes preſerves her innocence after ſhe has loſt her reputation. Beſides, the coquette is expoſed to many temptations, from which the prude is, in a great meaſure, free. The behaviour of the prude keeps the men at a proper diſtance; the behaviour of the coquette admits, and even invites them to improper familiarities; and how very danger-

ous theſe familiarities are, is more eaſily conceived than expreſſed: indeed it is from this quarter that our greateſt danger ariſes, as perhaps I may take occaſion to ſhow you in ſome other letter.

But, tho' the prude be expoſed to fewer dangers than the coquette, ſtill ſhe is expoſed to ſome, and to many more than ſhe would be, were ſhe but ſimply and unaffectedly modeſt. For, as the world ſees that her modeſty is partly counterfeit, they will be apt to conclude that it is entirely ſo, and that it is aſſumed only to ſave appearances; and, upon this ſuppoſition, many attempts will be made on her virtue, which never would have been made, but for her prudery and affectation. And, from a general review of the hiſtory of our ſex, I imagine, it will appear, that the arts of deſigning and deceitful men have ruined as many prudes as coquettes; and that almoſt all thoſe who have been thus ruined, have been remarkable for one or other of theſe foibles.

Let me therefore adviſe you, my dear Sophy, carefully to ſhun both theſe characters, as they are not only ridiculous, but (what is ſtill worſe) as they are dangerous. Never affect an appearance of greater gaiety on the one hand, nor of greater ſolemnity on the other, than true and unaffected modeſty requires. Endeavour to poſſeſs

poſſeſs your mind with a deep ſenſe and a ſincere love of this virtue, and then look and act as nature directs. This, in my opinion, is the only infallible method of having a modeſt deportment. Without this, indeed, your behaviour may be compoſed, ſedate, formal, ceremonious, and what not? But it can never be truly and unaffectedly modeſt.

Hitherto, my Dear, I have chiefly conſidered modeſty as it is oppoſed to impudence: I ſhould now come to conſider it as it is oppoſed to pride, in which view it more properly goes by the name of humility; but this I muſt reſerve for the ſubject of another letter. At preſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXVII.

My dear SOPHY,

IN my laſt letter, you know I endeavoured, in the beſt manner I could, to explain to you the nature of modeſty, as it is

oppoſed to impudence, and to recommend the practice of it by ſuch arguments as, I thought, were moſt adapted to your capacity. In this I ſhall conſider it, as it is oppoſed to pride. Modeſty, my Dear, conſidered in this light, conſiſts in entertaining a juſt opinion of our own ſenſe, knowledge, wit, beauty, rank and fortune: in a word, of our own abilities, endowments, and qualifications, whatever they are. I ſay, in entertaining a juſt opinion; for modeſty no more requires us to think worſe of ourſelves than we deſerve, than it allows us to think better. Nor would there be leſs danger in the one caſe than in the other.

For inſtance; were you to be ſo extremely modeſt, or rather indeed ſo extremely fooliſh, as to imagine, that you have leſs ſenſe than miſs Maynard, and therefore allow yourſelf to be directed by her in every thing, you plainly ſee the conſequence; you would be led into a thouſand errors, miſtakes, and prejudices, from which your own good ſenſe, did you exert it, would entirely keep you free. On the other hand, were you to be ſo very conceited as vainly to imagine, that you have more ſenſe than your aunt or me, and conſequently to diſregard all our admonitions, and blindly to follow your own humour, what do you think, my Dear, would become of you?

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Into how many faults, crimes, and vices, you might then poſſibly fall, I leave yourſelf to judge.

However uncommon the firſt of theſe errors may appear, yet I have known ſeveral young ladies who have run into it, and who have paid dearly for their folly.

You know miſs Bouverie; nature has bleſſed her with as much good ſenſe, as falls to the ſhare of moſt young ladies, had ſhe but courage enough to uſe it, which indeed till of late ſhe never had. For a long time, ſhe was ſo extremely timorous and diffident, that ſhe never dared to form an opinion of her own, but was content to be led by the opinions of other people. Some years ago, ſhe unhappily contracted an intimate acquaintance with lady Turner, whoſe mind is univerſally allowed to be a medley of prejudices, and her conduct a groupe of inconſiſtencies. From her the poor young creature imbibed ſo many fooliſh conceits, ſo many whimſical notions, as rendered her behaviour perfectly ridiculous, and which, had ſhe but opened her eyes, and ventured to think for herſelf, ſhe would have rejected with diſdain; but the truth is, ſhe never once thought of the matter, nor ever conceived that ſhe had a right to think for herſelf in any thing. At laſt her friends, apprehenſive of the conſequences, recalled

her into the country, where they lectured her ſo ſeverely, that, by mere dint of argument they awakened her from her lethargy; and now, like one arouſed from a dream, ſhe wonders where ſhe has been, or what ſhe has been doing, and is endeavouring to diveſt herſelf of her prejudices as faſt as ſhe can, tho' I think, 'tis ten to one, if ſome one or other of them does not ſtick to her as long as ſhe lives.

Thus from an exceſs of falſe modeſty, or rather of ſheepiſh diffidence, this unfortunate young lady has thrown away ſome of the beſt years of her life. Inſtead of learning ſuch wiſe maxims, as might have been of uſe to her in her future conduct, ſhe has been learning ſuch ridiculous prejudices, as perhaps the whole remaining part of her life will hardly be ſufficient to unlearn.

Let me therefore adviſe you, my dear Sophy, now that you are arrived at the years of diſcretion, never to be ſo very fooliſh as to reſign your own judgment to the judgment of any perſon whatever. Never entertain ſuch a mean opinion of your own ſenſe, nor ſuch a high opinion of the ſenſe of other people, as to comply with any thing, without underſtanding the reaſon of it. You know I have never treated you in this manner myſelf. Ever ſince you was capable to diſtinguiſh right from wrong, I have never

never desired you to do any one thing without giving you a reason for it; and if your mother has always condescended to give you a reason, you have certainly a right to expect the same favour from every body else. Perhaps some people may be apt to think, that this is a very odd and unaccountable way of proceeding; and that absolute and peremptory commands on the part of the parent, and blind and implicit obedience on the part of the child, is a much safer and a much shorter method. But every one to their own choice; this is my way, and I think it the best. I have always used you in the same manner, in which I would wish to be used myself, were I in your condition, and in which, indeed, I was used when I was in your condition. As you are a reasonable creature, I have always treated you as such; and those parents, who follow the other method, would do well to consider, whether it be so very safe as they imagine, to treat reasonable creatures, as if they had no reason at all; and whether every time the reason is thus over-ruled without being convinced, it is not thereby rendered so much the weaker, and less capable of exerting itself on future occasions.

But, my Dear, the greatest danger does not arise from this quarter. Tho' there are some young ladies that fall into this error,

yet, comparatively ſpeaking, there are very few: for one that errs from an exceſs of modeſty, there are thouſands who err from an exceſs of pride; and, if you are not greatly altered within theſe few years, I imagine you are much more inclined to the latter than to the former of theſe vices.

Pride, my Dear, conſiſts in having a high opinion of ourſelves, in over-rating our own abilities, and in looking down upon the reſt of the world with contempt and diſdain; tho', indeed, the world never fails to repay us in our own coin, and, for the moſt part, with intereſt too: for I never yet knew any perſon deſpiſe and contemn the world, but the world were always ſure to deſpiſe and contemn her as much, and perhaps a great deal more.

Nor, indeed, do I think it can well be otherwiſe; for, if I may be allowed to judge of the diſpoſitions of other people from what I experience in my own breaſt, I ſhould imagine, that of all the paſſions, there is no one ſo apt to excite the ſame feeling in the mind of the beholder, as that of contempt and diſdain. We can behold a perſon inſpired with anger, rage, hatred, or malice, againſt us, without having our minds greatly affected, or, at leaſt, not affected with any of theſe particular paſſions: but we cannot poſſibly behold any one looking down upon us with

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an air of contempt and diſdain, without feeling the ſame paſſion immediately awakened in our own breaſts, without contemning and deſpiſing her as heartily in our turn. To account for this diſpoſition of the human mind, is none of my buſineſs, nor indeed is it in my power: that I leave to the philoſophers, whoſe province it is: but the fact, I think, is certain, and I have only mentioned it as a caution to all proud, haughty, and ſupercilious young ladies: 'tis a memorandum, which they would do well to write down in their pocket-books, and conſult every morning, as carefully and as duly as they do their glaſſes. So much for pride in general.

Now, my Dear, allow me to aſk you, in particular, what it is you have to be proud of? Is it your beauty? This indeed is commonly the firſt, and, what is ſtill more ſurpriſing, it is frequently the laſt thing, upon which the fooliſh part of our ſex pique themſelves. If a child has but an eaſy ſhape and a tolerable complexion, it is ten to one but the coaxing nurſe, the artful maid, or the fond parents, ſoon flatter her into an opinion, that ſhe is mighty pretty and handſome; and thus you ſhall ſee the poor young thing mincing about, as prim and preciſe, as if ſhe were a young lady of twenty; and all this forſooth, becauſe ſhe is a beauty, tho' 'tis more than probable that

the pretty creature has not the leaſt idea of what is meant by a beauty. And having her mind ſo early tinctured with this prejudice, 'tis odds but it ſticks to her during her whole life. Being accuſtomed, at the age of five or ſix, to conſider herſelf as a beauty, ſhe will poſſibly continue to view herſelf in the ſame light, even at the age of fifty or ſixty. As ſhe was told that ſhe was handſome before ſhe knew it herſelf, ſhe will probably think ſhe is ſo, after all the reſt of the world have for a long time, been of a different opinion. Nor in this is there any thing ſtrange; for being taught to regard beauty as the principal, and perhaps the only, recommendation of a woman, ſhe has not been at pains to acquire any other qualification; and as this is the only one ſhe poſſeſſes, no wonder that ſhe endeavours to retain it, or, at leaſt, to think ſhe retains it, as long as ſhe can.

The truth is, my Dear, a mere beauty is one of the moſt inſignificant characters in the world, and, if ſhe is proud and haughty into the bargain, ſhe is perfectly ridiculous and contemptible, becauſe ſhe is proud of that, which in effect, ſhe does not poſſeſs, and which indeed it is abſolutely impoſſible ſhe can poſſeſs; for I will venture to affirm, that pride and beauty cannot meet in the ſame perſon. A proud beauty! Why, my Dear, this is juſt ſuch another con-

contradiction, as if you would ſay a pretty hump-back: a proud look and a beautiful face are every whit as inconſiſtent as a crooked back and an elegant ſhape. For, ſuppoſe that pride ſhould not deſtroy the regularity of your features or the fineneſs of your complexion; tho', in fact, if it is habitually indulged, it will, in time, deſtroy both the one and the other: but ſuppoſe it ſhould not, what then, my Dear? Are regular features and a fine complexion the ſole ingredients of beauty? Do theſe two conſtitute this amiable quality? That they do not, I have endeavoured to ſhew you in a former letter. Theſe indeed are neceſſary, but theſe are not ſufficient: ſomething more is wanting, and ſomething more eſſential too, to wit, the graceful air and the *ſpeaking* mien, a look expreſſive of modeſty, love, pity, compaſſion, in a word, of all the kind and tender affections. This is the life, 'tis the ſoul of beauty; the others are only its body. This, with very indifferent features and complexion, will warm the heart, and engage the affection of the beholder; but the fineſt features and complexion, without this, will, at beſt, but catch the eye, and excite a fooliſh wonder and admiration.

Hence it is, that your mere beauties, as they are falſely called, (for in reality, they are no beauties at all) frequently remain unmarried

unmarried all their life long; whereas thoſe who are poſſeſſed of this more excellent part, this ſoul of beauty, ſeldom or never live ſingle. Hence too it is, that the former, when they happen to be married, are almoſt always unhappy: and indeed, how can they poſſibly be otherwiſe? For being poſſeſſed of no ſenſe nor virtue themſelves, they are likely to be courted only by perſons of the ſame character; and a happy marriage, without ſenſe or virtue in either of the parties, would be ſuch a miracle, as the world never ſaw. On the contrary, the latter hardly ever fail of being happy in a married ſtate, becauſe, being ſenſible and virtuous themſelves, and commonly joined with thoſe who are ſo, they cannot well be other than happy.

Now, my Dear, if beauty conſiſt chiefly in a mild and gentle aſpect, in a look expreſſive of all the kind and tender affections, then pride, which is one of the moſt odious diſpoſitions, and is entirely deſtructive of theſe kind and tender affections, muſt, of courſe, be inconſiſtent with beauty; ſo that, you plainly ſee, 'tis abſolutely impoſſible for a proud perſon to be beautiful.

But were it otherwiſe; were it even poſſible for a young lady to aſſume a proud and haughty air without deſtroying her beauty, ſtill I ſhould be glad to know what

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good purpoſe it can ſerve, or what ſhe can gain by ſuch a behaviour. Does ſhe think, by this means, to attract the eyes, and engage the hearts, of the male ſex? If ſhe does, I am afraid ſhe will find herſelf greatly diſappointed, and that ſhe has taken the wrong method; for, if I may believe your papa, no man of ſenſe and ſpirit will flatter her vanity ſo much, as to favour her with the leaſt mark of his notice or regard. On the contrary, he aſſures me, that, when he was a ſtudent of the Inner-Temple, he and all the ſenſible part of his acquaintance laid it down as a fixt maxim, to paſs by every lady of this character with an averted look; and that he believes, all men of real merit will ever behave in the ſame manner. Hence it appears, that a proud beauty, inſtead of recommending herſelf to the eſteem, only expoſes herſelf to the contempt of the world.

But perhaps, my Dear, your pride is founded on ſomething elſe: perhaps you are proud of your rank and fortune. In theſe reſpects, indeed, Providence has been very kind to you; for, tho' you are not placed in one of the higheſt ſtations of life, yet you are far exalted above the loweſt. But why proud of that which you had no hand in procuring? There ſeems to be ſome excuſe at leaſt, for valuing ourſelves on account of

thoſe qualifications, which are of our own acquiring; ſuch as our abilities in writing, cyphering, muſick, and the like; tho' even of theſe, it will appear upon a cloſer examination, we have no juſt reaſon to be vain; but to be proud of that which we poſſeſs, whether we will or no, is little leſs than a contradiction.

Beſides, my Dear, ſuppoſe it were allowable for you to be proud of your rank and fortune, ſtill who is obliged to bear the inſolence of your pride and haughtineſs? Not your ſuperiors ſurely; for they are your betters; not your equals; for they are as good as yourſelf. If therefore it be any body at all, it muſt be your inferiors. But if theſe people have no immediate dependance upon you, why ſhould they be condemned to ſubmit to this mortification? What is it to them, whether you are the daughter of a duke or a knight, of an earl or eſquire? Whether your fortune be ten thouſand or only ten hundred pounds? Becauſe you may happen to be high born and well proportioned, are they, on that account, to be inſulted with your lofty and ſupercilious airs? No, my Dear, they are not; and, what is more, believe me, they will not. For, if you take but the trouble to obſerve the looks of thoſe, whom you treat in this manner, you will always find, that, inſtead of admiring you,

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as perhaps you might fondly expect, they deſpiſe and hate you moſt heartily. And, in my opinion, they act very wiſely; for as they derive no advantage from your ſuperior rank and fortune, why ſhould they ſuffer any mortification from your pride and arrogance.

But ſuppoſe they did derive ſome advantage; ſuppoſe they were even your menial ſervants; is that a ſufficient reaſon, do you think, for behaving to them with pride and ſtatelineſs? Or will ſuch a behaviour make them more ſubmiſſive and obedient? Far, very far from it. Pride, my Dear, can never produce any other effect, than to render the perſon infected with it ridiculous and contemptible. I own, indeed, that there is a certain dignity of character to be maintained in the preſence of ſervants; becauſe in this caſe, at leaſt the common ſaying will generally hold true, to wit, *that too great familiarity breeds contempt*; but I affirm, at the ſame time, that pride differs as much from dignity, as a monkey does from a man; the one is but an imitation, and a very ſorry imitation, of the other. Dignity of character will never allow us to do any thing unworthy of ourſelves; pride is always prompting us to do every thing that may remind others of their inferiority; and how much ſoever your ſervants may be inferior to you, yet it is a truth, which they

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don't like to have always ſounding in their ears; 'tis rather their part to acknowledge it, than yours to aſſert it; nor ſhould you ever aſſert it, except when they ſeem to forget their proper diſtance; and even then you may do it in ſo ſoft and gentle a manner, as to ſhew that you act not from pride, but from a regard to decency and decorum.

Thus, you ſee, my Dear, that neither the higheſt rank, nor the greateſt fortune, can be a juſt foundation of pride; and whenever you find yourſelf inclined to treat your inferiors with contempt and diſdain, let me adviſe you to reflect how you would bear ſuch treatment from your ſuperiors; and if you think you could not brook the latter, then you muſt take care never to be guilty of the former; for in this, as in every thing elſe, you ought always to obſerve the *golden rule, of doing to others as you would have them do to you, were you in their circumſtances and they in yours.*

Let me now aſk you, my dear Sophy, in the next place, what elſe have you to be proud of? Is it your ſenſe, wit, or knowledge? Of theſe, indeed, you poſſeſs as large a ſhare as moſt young ladies of your age. But what then? To whom are you indebted for theſe qualifications? Think with yourſelf, my Dear, and you will find that your ſenſe and wit you have received from

from heaven, your knowledge, in a great measure, from your inſtructors; and to be proud of what you have received from others, is certainly a very poor and mean-ſpirited kind of pride.

Beſides, my Dear, to be proud of your ſenſe, is a plain proof that you poſſeſs but a very inconſiderable ſhare of that excellent quality, one of the higheſt attainments of which is, to betray no conſciouſneſs of it in your words or actions, at leaſt, not ſo much as to give pain and uneaſineſs to thoſe about you. To be proud of your knowledge, is a ſhrewd ſign of your ignorance. She, whoſe knowledge is very confined, vainly imagines that ſhe knows all that can be known; but ſhe, whoſe knowledge is more extenſive, is fully convinced that there is more to be known than ſhe has yet learned, or indeed than ever ſhe can learn. Hence it is that the fooliſh and the ignorant are generally proud, poſitive, and conceited; whereas the ſenſible and the learned are, for the moſt part, modeſt, humble and diffident. As, therefore, my dear Sophy, you would wiſh to avoid the firſt of theſe characters, and to acquire the laſt, you muſt take care never to be proud of your ſenſe and knowledge; for the moment you begin to be ſo, the world will ſtrip you even of the merit

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of what you really have, and deſpiſe you for a vain and empty fool.

In any event, an over-weening opinion of your own abilities will always make you a diſagreeable companion, as it will naturally prompt you to treat your friends with ſuch an air of ſuperiority, as, you may be aſſured, they will not patiently bear. For thoſe, who have leſs ſenſe and knowledge than you, may, notwithſtanding, have ſenſibility enough to feel, and ſpirit enough to reſent, any affront you offer them. If you deliver your ſentiments with modeſty and diffidence they will liſten to you with attention, and pay you all that reſpect and deference, which is due to your ſuperior knowledge; but if, on the contrary, you behave in a haughty and inſolent manner, they will forget your real merit, and condemn you for your intolerable pride and arrogance. In a word, there is not, in nature, a more ridiculous and contemptible character, than a proud and haughty perſon with a ſmall ſtock of knowledge, except ſhe who is proud and haughty without any knowledge at all.

Let me, therefore, perſuade you, dear Sophy, never to be ſo proud of your own abilities, as to upbraid others with their weakneſs; for ſuch a conduct cannot poſſibly do them any good, but will certainly do you a great deal of harm, as it will expoſe

poſe you to the contempt and deriſion of all the world. And, if you make no other uſe of your ſuperior ſenſe and knowledge, than to laugh at the ignorance and folly of your companions, it ſurely would have been much better for them, and perhaps as well for yourſelf, had you been endued with a leſs ſhare of theſe excellent qualities.

After what I have ſaid, my Dear, concerning the folly of pride and inſolence, I hope I need not ſpend much time in proving the ſtill greater folly of vanity and oſtentation. If you ought not to be proud of your beauty, rank, fortune, ſenſe wit, or knowledge, you ought ſtill leſs to be vain of your fine cloaths, your ſplendid equipage, or any other baubles and gew-gaws of the like nature. There is ſomething in this kind of pride or vanity ſo truly contemptible, that it is ſurpriſing how any reaſonable creature can be guilty of it. And yet, contemptible as it is, ſuch is the weakneſs of human nature in general, and of our ſex in particular, that there is no one vice into which we are more apt to run.

There is miſs Greville: ſhe never gets a new dreſs, but it is like to turn her brain. She appeared laſt night at Ranelagh, in a gown of a charming colour, and a moſt elegant faſhion; but the misfortune was, that it ſo entirely engroſſed the poor young creature's

ture's attention, that ſhe ſeemed to employ her whole time in contemplating her dreſs, and obſerving whether others were not doing the ſame. Miſs Mildmay is a very good kind of girl: ſhe is, for the moſt part, ſufficiently civil and complaiſant to all her acquaintance; but when ſhe is admitted into the company of her ſuperiors, and eſpecially when ſhe gets into lady Langham's gilt chariot, ſhe becomes ſo extremely ſhort-ſighted, or, which is the ſame thing, ſo extremely vain, that ſhe does not know anybody that is not better than herſelf. Theſe, my Dear, and many other characters of the like nature, which I might eaſily draw, are ſo very ridiculous, that, I dare ſay, the bare mention of them is ſufficient to deter you from falling into the ſame errors.

To conclude, my Dear, let you be poſſeſſed of beauty, rank, fortune, ſenſe, wit, or knowledge, in ever ſo high a degree; be your dreſs ever ſo rich, or your equipage ever ſo grand; let your qualifications, natural or acquired, be as conſiderable as they will; ſtill you muſt take care never to inſult or deſpiſe thoſe who are inferior to you in all or any of theſe reſpects: and, if you faithfully obſerve this rule, you will never incur the imputation of pride and vanity. Your papa, your brothers and ſiſters join me,

me, in wiſhing you all manner of happineſs. I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXVIII.

My dear SOPHY,

I AM glad to hear, by a letter I have juſt received from your aunt, that you are in good health: but am ſorry, at the ſame time, to be informed, that you are too ſubject to a weakneſs, from which I thought you had been as free as any young lady in England: the weakneſs I mean is anger. She ſays, you are ſo very warm and paſſionate, that you are apt to take fire at every little affront that is offered, and every trifling injury that is done you.

Far be it from me, my Dear, to adviſe you to put up with affronts or injuries from any perſon whatever; but I would have you to conſider ſeriouſly, whether anger be the moſt effectual means of redreſſing the wrongs you may have already ſuſtained, or preventing the like inſults for the future. The former purpoſe ſurely it can never ſerve,

ſerve, becauſe it will diſturb and diſcompoſe your mind, and render it utterly incapable of liſtening to the dictates of reaſon, without which you can never do any thing that is wiſe and prudent; and it will be ſo far from producing the latter effect, that, inſtead of ſecuring you from, it will only expoſe you the more to, the ſame bad treatment. For every perſon, who has a mind to teaze and torment you, will take the advantage of your hot and fiery diſpoſition, to inflame your anger, and put you in a paſſion; and, when they have done ſo, they will ſtand by, laughing at your folly, and enjoying the fiend-like pleaſure of ſeeing a fellow-creature miſerable. And what a mean, what a wretched, what a pitiful condition is this, to lie at the mercy of every one that can ſay an ill natured thing, or do an ill-bred action? This is to put your happineſs entirely in the power of others, which is placing it upon a very ſandy foundation indeed.

In a word, anger can never have any other effect, than to render the angry perſon herſelf unhappy. To be angry, is to revenge on ourſelves the injuries we receive from others, which is ſuch an extreme degree of folly, as, one would think, no-body of common ſenſe could poſſibly be guilty of. Would it not be better to behave, in

ſuch

ſuch caſes, with a real, or, at leaſt, a ſeeming indifference; to tell the injurious perſon, that you are not inſenſible of the affront ſhe meant to offer you; but that you have too great a regard for the peace of your own mind and the dignity of your own character to fall into a paſſion on that account; and that your are fully determined, by breaking off all further correſpondence, never to give her another opportunity of treating you in the ſame manner?

Beſides, my Dear, you ought to conſider with yourſelf, whether the affronts and injuries, which are ſo apt to inflame your anger, be real, or imaginary; for ſome people are ſo very ingenious in this art of *ſelf-tormenting*, that they will burſt into a paſſion, not only for the ſlighteſt reaſons, but frequently for no reaſon at all. They reſent affronts that never were offered, they revenge injuries that never were done.

Mrs. Martin, who is one of this cholerick complexion, has, to my knowledge, abandoned ſome of her beſt friends for not ſpeaking to her at the play, when, in fact, they were not there, and diſmiſſed ſome of her moſt faithful ſervants, for not performing what it was impoſſible for any human creature to perform in their circumſtances. 'Tis in vain for the friend or the ſervant to remonſtrate; ſhe will hear no apology; their

excuſe, ſhe ſays, would be worſe than their crime; ſhe believes, nay ſhe is certain, ſhe is poſitive they are in the wrong; and if ſhe thinks they are ſo, 'tis the ſame thing, to her at leaſt, as if they were ſo in reality: ſhould ſhe take it in her head to affirm that two and two are equal to five, no-body muſt preſume to contradict her: if they do, ſhe will make them ſmart ſeverely for their preſumption; for the misfortune is, that your paſſionate people are always proud and conceited: their paſſion makes them fall into errors, and their pride will not allow them to be undeceived. The truth is: a paſſionate perſon, in one of her frantic fits, will talk and act as unreaſonably as any lunatic in Bedlam, thereby verifying the old proverb, that *anger is a ſhort madneſs.*

Let me entreat you, my dear Sophy, to conſider, in the next place, how very indecent and unbecoming ſuch a behaviour is; how utterly inconſiſtent with all the rules of politeneſs and good-breeding. 'Tis hardly excuſable even in the very meaneſt and loweſt of the vulgar; but in a lady of a genteel education 'tis abſolutely intolerable. It was a cuſtom among the ancient Greeks (if I am not miſtaken) to intoxicate their ſlaves with liquor, and then expoſe them to the view of their young men, in order to inſpire them with a deteſtation of drunken-

neſs.

neſs. In like manner, my Dear, were you to behold the oyſter-women in Billingſgate, or the orange-wenches in Covent-Garden, ſcolding and bawling, in their violent tranſports of paſſion, you would, I dare ſay, conceive ſuch an utter hatred and abhorrence of anger, as would effectually prevent you from ever giving way to it for the future.

'Tis but a poor apology which theſe lunatics make for themſelves, to wit, that, in their ſober moods, they are the beſt natured people in the world. A lion too is a very peaceable creature when his belly is full; but a lion will grow hungry, and a paſſionate perſon will become peeviſh; and then I would no more put my happineſs in the power of the latter, than I would expoſe my life to the mercy of the former. Beſides, let them be as kind and good-natured as they will, ſtill it is certain, that they frequently do more miſchief in an hour, than they can repair in a year, or even during their whole life. As therefore, my dear Sophy, you value the peace of your own mind, and the happineſs of thoſe with whom you are connected; as you would wiſh to acquire and preſerve the character of a polite lady, you muſt take care to check and reſtrain your propenſity to anger, and never allow it to break forth into thoſe ſudden and violent

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tranſports, which are, at once, ſo ſhocking and ridiculous.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to inſinuate, that you ſhould feel no uneaſineſs when you are injured or affronted; I might as well adviſe you to feel no pain when you put your finger in the fire; the one being as impoſſible as the other, at leaſt, to a perſon of any ſenſibility: all I contend for, is, that you ſhould never ſuffer this uneaſineſs to carry you beyond the bounds of prudence and diſcretion. Let it lead you, by all means, to take ſuch meaſures as may prevent a repetition of the like injuries for the future; but let it never excite you to return theſe injuries, or to repay the injurious perſon in her own coin. This is always a ſign of the moſt deſpicable littleneſs of mind, of the moſt contemptible meanneſs of ſpirit, and is never allowable, except when it is the only poſſible method of ſecuring our own peace and tranquillity.

The virtue, directly oppoſed to anger and peeviſhneſs, and which I would recommend to your ſtudy and practice, is humanity and good-nature; a certain meekneſs of temper and gentleneſs of diſpoſition, that makes us happy in ourſelves, and prompts us to communicate happineſs to all around us. This temper of mind, it muſt be confeſſed, is rather the gift of nature, than

than the attainment of art. Some people are born with ſuch a happy conſtitution, ſuch a *milkineſs of blood*, that hardly any thing can diſturb or diſcompoſe them; whilſt others are endued with ſuch an extreme degree of ſenſibility, that almoſt every triſle offends them. The former may be ſaid to be more happy than the latter, but not more virtuous; for nothing deſerves the name of virtue, that is not of our own acquiſition. And, however difficult the taſk may appear, yet this virtue of good-nature may, in ſome meaſure, be acquired by every one who will apply herſelf to the ſtudy of it with care and diligence.

For this purpoſe, let me adviſe you, my Dear, to maintain a conſtant chearfulneſs and alacrity in every part of your behaviour. This is the outward garb and expreſſion of good-nature; and tho' there may be an appearance of this virtue without the reality, yet, by preſerving the appearance of it habitually, you may come, at laſt, to acquire the virtue itſelf. For 'tis almoſt impoſſible for any one to perſonate a character thro' her whole life, without imbibing, in ſome degree, the true ſpirit of the character ſhe repreſents. Thus, by a kind of innocent deceit, you may not only cheat the world into an opinion of your good-nature; but, what is more, you may even cheat your-

ſelf into the actual poſſeſſion of this amiable quality.

Let me perſuade you, my dear Sophy, in the next place, to converſe chiefly, and, if poſſible, only with thoſe who are remarkable for their humanity and good-nature. The great influence of example I have endeavoured to explain to you in a former letter; and in this particular inſtance it is as powerful as in any other. Among people of this character, you will hear nothing that can inflame your anger or reſentment, but every thing, on the contrary, that can inſpire you with chearfulneſs and good-humour. At any rate, chearfulneſs will ſupply the place of good-nature in one reſpect; for, tho' it will not render you ſo happy in yourſelf, yet it will make you equally agreeable to your companions. If you always ſeem to be good-natured, 'tis the ſame thing, to them at leaſt, as if you really were ſo.

Indeed, after you have acquired a tolerable ſtock of good-nature, perhaps it will not be amiſs to put it to the trial, by keeping company ſometimes with the peeviſh and ill-natured, in order to learn whether you can bear injuries or affronts without falling into a paſſion. For ſhe, whoſe good-nature is never brought to the teſt, cannot poſſibly know whether ſhe is really poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed of it or not. If you can ſtand the trial, you may then ſafely conclude, that you have made conſiderable progreſs in the acquiſition of this virtue; but, if you cannot, you have then juſt reaſon to ſuſpect, that your ſhare of it (if, indeed, you have any ſhare of it at all) is very ſcanty and inconſiderable. But this is an experiment, which you ought not to make too ſoon nor too frequently: otherwiſe, inſtead of being a teſt to try the ſtrength and reality of your good-nature, it may prove the cauſe of its ruin and deſtruction.

In order to excite you, my Dear, to the ſtudy and practice of good-nature, let me entreat you to conſider the many happy effects which flow from it. It is, as I have already obſerved, an inexhauſtible fund of inward peace and tranquillity. What the wiſe man ſays of a good conſcience (without which, perhaps, good-nature cannot exiſt, at leaſt not in its higheſt perfection) may properly enough be applied to this virtue, to wit, that it is "a continual feaſt." A perſon, bleſſed with this happy temper of mind, poſſeſſes within herſelf a never failing ſource of joy and pleaſure: ſhe derives happineſs from almoſt every incident and occurrence of life, even from thoſe, which, to the peeviſh and ill-natured, are the cauſe of pain and uneaſineſs. Thus the bee imbibes

honey from the very ſame herbs, from which more noxious animals extract venom.

Nor is it only the ſpring of internal happineſs; it is likewiſe the moſt effectual means of recommending us to the love and affection of our fellow-creatures. Wit, knowledge, and good ſenſe, may make us eſteemed and reſpected; but 'tis good-nature, and that alone, which can make us beloved. And, from a general ſurvey of the world, you will find it to hold univerſally true, that people are more inclined to court and cultivate the friendſhip of the humane and good-natured, than of the witty, the learned, and the ſenſible. And, in this reſpect, they act very wiſely: the former communicate what knowledge they have with modeſty and diffidence; the latter with pride and haughtineſs; the former do it to oblige the company; the latter, to aſſert their own ſuperiority. In a word, the witty and learned may have many acquaintance, and perhaps ſome admirers, but few, if any friends; whereas the good-natured have as many friends and well-wiſhers, as they have acquaintance. Every one that knows them, loves them. Nor, indeed, can it poſſibly be otherwiſe; for they who wiſh well to all the world, muſt, of conſequence, enjoy the good wiſhes of all the world in their turn.

Miſs

Miſs Aſtley and miſs Lambert are remarkable inſtances of what I have been ſaying. Miſs Aſtley is poſſeſſed of an uncommon ſhare of wit, ſenſe, and knowledge; but then ſhe is peeviſh and ill-natured. The conſequence of this is, that tho' ſhe is univerſally admired, ſhe is as univerſally dreaded. Her friends will not intruſt her with their ſecrets: becauſe theſe ſhe might betray in a fit of paſſion: they will not put their happineſs in her power; becauſe that ſhe might ſacrifice to a witty expreſſion. Miſs Lambert, on the contrary, tho' endued with a very moderate degree of ſenſe, wit, or knowledge, is bleſſed with ſuch a ſweet temper and gentle diſpoſition, that ſhe is beloved and careſſed by all her acquaintance. She knows the moſt important ſecrets of all her friends, becauſe ſhe never diſcloſed the moſt trifling ſecret of any one: they are not afraid to intruſt her with their happineſs, becauſe they are convinced, that ſhe has the ſame tender regard for it, as ſhe has for her own.

Beſides, my Dear, good-nature is not only a moſt excellent virtue in itſelf, but is alſo the foundation and ground-work of many other virtues; ſuch as pity, compaſſion, charity, benevolence, politeneſs and good-manners, of all which I ſhall give you my ſentiments in my next letter. At preſent

ſent I have no more to add, but that I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XXXIX.

My dear SOPHY,

AS I promiſed in my laſt letter, I ſhall now give you my ſentiments of thoſe virtues, which I told you were founded in humanity and good-nature. And the firſt I ſhall mention, is, pity or compaſſion. By this, my Dear, I mean that pleaſing pain, which every generous mind feels upon ſeeing a fellow-creature in diſtreſs. This painful ſenſation is certainly attended with a very conſiderable degree of pleaſure, when we have it in our power to alleviate the calamities of the unhappy ſufferer; and, even when that cannot be done, there is ſtill a mixture of pleaſure in it, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of our own virtuous diſpoſition, and the propenſity we feel within ourſelves to give aſſiſtance, were it in our power: ſo that perhaps we may venture to affirm,

firm, that the pleaſure, which a humane and good-natured perſon enjoys, even when incapable of relieving the diſtreſſed, is infinitely ſuperior to any happineſs, that can be taſted by the cruel and hard-hearted.

In people, indeed, of a very tender heart and delicate conſtitution, this ſympathy is ſo ſtrong and powerful, that, if we may take their own word for it, they feel a pain in that individual part of the body, in which the miſerable object is affected. But whatever may be in this, certain it is, that every perſon, who has not entirely diveſted herſelf of all the finer feelings of humanity (and, I hope, none of our ſex are ſo utterly depraved and corrupted) muſt have a very uneaſy ſenſation at the ſight of a miſerable object, and a ſtrong inclination to afford relief and aſſiſtance; and with this inclination it is that I would have you to comply in every particular inſtance: never endeavour to ſtifle or ſuppreſs it: to do ſo were to offer violence to the dictates of nature, and to diſobey the command of God, the author of nature.

But, my Dear, pity is not confined ſolely to thoſe who are labouring under diſeaſes of the body; it regards ſuch, likewiſe, as are afflicted with grief and ſorrow of mind, whether occaſioned by loſs of friends or fortune, or by any other cauſe. With theſe

you ought to ſympathize and condole: their pain you ought to ſooth and mitigate: to them you ſhould adminiſter all the comfort and conſolation you can. This is one of the beſt and moſt important offices of friendſhip; but ſuch is the refinement, ſhall I ſay, or rather corruption of modern manners, that it is a good office, which few friends deſire to receive, and fewer ſtill chuſe to perform.

A lady now-a-days, upon the loſs of a near relation, ſhuts herſelf up in her own houſe, perhaps confines herſelf to her own room, where ſhe remains inacceſſible to all her friends, till ſhe has mourned out the full time, which the forms of ceremony preſcribe; and then returns into the world as gay and chearful as ever: ſo that, unleſs from her weeds, you ſhall not be able to judge whether ſhe has been mourning or not. I don't blame her for keeping her room on theſe occaſions; no: good ſenſe, as well as decency requires it; but what I find fault with is, her not giving her friends an opportunity of performing one of the moſt eſſential duties of friendſhip, namely, that of ſoothing and aſſuaging her grief, and adminiſtering comfort to her in her affliction. Does ſhe think that ſhe is comfortleſs, and that all the conſolations of her friends, like fewel added to the flame, would only

only tend to make her ſorrow more ſevere and inſupportable, by recaling to her mind and remembrance of the fond parent, or affectionate ſiſter, whom ſhe has loſt? At firſt perhaps this might be the caſe: the firſt tranſports of paſſion are frequently ſo violent and ungovernable, that no arguments are ſufficient to moderate or reſtrain them. But theſe tranſports cannot laſt long: their own violence will ſoon exhauſt them; and when once they are over, ſhe certainly ought to receive the company of her friends, who, by their ſenſible and judicious converſation, may ſhow her the danger, the folly, and even impiety of immoderate grief, and, by their ſoft and gentle perſuaſion, may bring her back to her former calmneſs and tranquillity of mind. If ſhe refuſes to comply with this, whatever ſhe may think herſelf, or whatever ſhe would have the world to think, ſhe may depend upon it, that ſhe is more influenced by a regard to form and faſhion, than by the dictates of ſound reaſon and common ſenſe.

But however deſirous a lady may be to receive comfort and conſolation from her friends, yet there are few, if any, friends to be found, who will undertake the unpleaſing, as they think, tho' I ſhould rather call it the pleaſing, taſk. For, what can be more pleaſing than to mingle the tears of pity

and

and compaſſion with thoſe of the wretched and miſerable; to ſympathize and condole with them in their ſorrow and affliction; and to pour the balm of comfort in their aching and bleeding hearts? There is ſomething in theſe tender offices of friendſhip infinitely more raviſhing and tranſporting than any thing that can be enjoyed even in the very height of proſperity and good fortune. Thus, while we communicate happineſs to others, we, at the ſame time, enjoy it ourſelves. Beſides, this generous conduct is not only productive of the moſt exquiſite pleaſure, but alſo of the moſt beneficial effects; for it naturally tends to humanize and ſoften the heart, and to render it ſuſceptible of the moſt fine and delicate feelings. And ſurely there is no feeling more fine and delicate than that of pity and compaſſion: 'tis the nobleſt affection in the human mind; 'tis the bond and cement of civil ſociety; 'tis the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of our ſex, and gives an additional grace and beauty to all our other virtues and accompliſhments.

It muſt, therefore, be matter of great ſurpriſe to every thinking perſon, that moſt women ſhould be ſo very careful to ſhun every opportunity of exerciſing this amiable virtue. What can be the cauſe of this unreaſonable conduct? Are they afraid of deviating

viating from the faſhion and appearing ſingular? A poor apology indeed! To be ſo entirely devoted to the preſent mode as to follow it, in contradiction to the virtuous feelings of our own hearts, and the dictates of our own conſciences, is certainly the moſt mean and abject kind of ſlavery. Or, do they think that their hearts are ſo very tender, that they could not bear the ſight of a friend in diſtreſs? Let them only try the experiment, and I imagine, they will ſoon find, that they have been miſtaken in their notions: at any rate, it is ſurely a moſt abſurd way of reaſoning to alledge, that, becauſe their hearts are extremely tender, they muſt therefore diſcover no outward expreſſions of tenderneſs at all. Or, finally, are they ſo very ſelfiſh, that they will not take any trouble or concern about the calamities and misfortunes of others? This, I believe, is an excuſe, which they will be aſhamed to make, and yet I'm afraid, 'tis the only excuſe that can be made for them; if, indeed, that may be ſaid to be an excuſe, which is rather an aggravation of their crime, as it plainly ſhews them to be deſtitute of that generous ſympathy and fellow-feeling, which is the very life and ſoul of friendſhip. But whatever be the motive that influences theſe people, let me intreat you, my dear Sophy, to obſerve a very different, and a more

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virtuous conduct. Chearfully embrace every opportunity of exerciſing your pity and compaſſion; for, beſides the advantages I have mentioned above, it will enable you the better to bear your own misfortunes. By obſerving how others behave, when oppreſſed with calamities and afflictions, you will learn how to behave yourſelf, when placed in the ſame or the like circumſtances.

The next virtue I would recommend to you, my Dear, is charity, which conſiſts in relieving the poor and needy, of whom you will ſee but too many in the ſtreets and public walks about town. How the number of beggars comes to be ſo greatly increaſed, it is not my buſineſs to enquire, nor, indeed, is it in my power to explain: tho', I muſt own, I have frequently thought it very unaccountable, that, in a nation ſo rich as England, and eſpecially in a city ſo wealthy as London, any people ſhould be reduced to ſuch a low ebb of miſery, as not to be able to ſupport themſelves, or not to have a title to be ſupported by the public. Perhaps the laws relating to the poor are not ſufficient: perhaps thoſe we have are not ſtrictly enough put in execution: perhaps too our public rulers may think it conducive to the intereſts of virtue, that ſome beggars ſhould be allowed to ſolicit our charity in the ſtreets, as it naturally tends

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to inſpire us with humanity, and to remind us of the uncertain and precarious nature of all worldly pomp and grandeur. But to whatever cauſe the great numbers of poor may be owing, 'tis your duty to relieve and aſſiſt them, as much and as often as you can: never paſs by an object of charity without beſtowing ſuch an alms as is ſuitable to your rank and fortune.

'Tis in vain for you to object, that ſome of theſe people have brought themſelves into this wretched condition, by their own folly and wickedneſs; and that, therefore, they ſhould be left to ſuffer the puniſhment, which is the natural conſequence of their crimes. Leave it, my Dear, to the wiſe Governor of the univerſe to puniſh them as he thinks proper: 'tis enough for you that they are poor and needy; that circumſtance alone is ſufficient to entitle them to your charitable aſſiſtance. I own, indeed, that there is a material diſtinction to be made between perſons of this character, and thoſe who have been reduced to poverty by unforeſeen and unavoidable accidents. The former are certainly much leſs deſerving of charity than the latter, but ſtill they deſerve it; and to excuſe ourſelves from performing acts of charity by ſuch frivolous pretexts, is perhaps in itſelf a more heinous crime, than any that can be juſtly laid to the charge

charge of the unhappy beggars: whilſt we fondly think we are expreſſing our hatred and abhorrence of their vicious conduct, we are, in effect, only ſeeking a cloak to conceal our own want of charity. Beſides, with regard to public beggars, 'tis impoſſible for you to be informed of the true cauſe of their poverty unleſs from themſelves; and, if the accounts they give be not improbable and contradictory, you ought to believe them: in any event, you ought to aſſiſt them.

But, my Dear, there is ſtill a greater grievance. Among the infinite numbers of poor people with whom our ſtreets are crouded, there are many cheats and impoſtors. In one place you ſhall ſee a woman, who, perhaps, never had a child of her own, with two babes in her arms, and two or three by her ſide, beſeeching all chriſtian paſſengers to have pity on the widow and fatherleſs. In another you may behold a man, of a ſound conſtitution and in perfect health, endeavouring to move compaſſion and obtain an alms by counterfeiting all the outward ſymptoms of the moſt violent palſy. What then, you'll ſay, would I have you to do in theſe and the like caſes? Why, my Dear, if you are abſolutely certain that they are cheats and impoſtors, I would be very far from adviſing you to give

give them any aſſiſtance: to do ſo were to encourage vice and wickedneſs, and to throw away upon vile miſcreants, what ought to be beſtowed upon thoſe who are really poor and indigent. But this is a circumſtance, which, I apprehend, it will be extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, for you to learn with any degree of certainty; and therefore, while the caſe remains doubtful, I would have you to give them an alms at a venture. If they are cheats, the blame lies not upon you who have acted from a good principle, but upon themſelves, who are wicked enough to deceive the public, and upon the civil magiſtrate, who is careleſs enough to allow ſuch deceits to paſs unpuniſhed. At any rate, 'tis better to relieve twenty impoſtors than to neglect one real object of charity.

But, my Dear, there is is another ſpecies of charity, of a leſs public indeed, but not of a leſs important nature. There are many poor families, who, with all their labour and induſtry, are not able to keep themſelves above want, and yet are aſhamed to ſupply their wants by begging in public. Some of theſe, having been reduced to poverty, from a ſtate of plenty and affluence, retain ſo much of their former delicacy of ſentiment, that they are even ſolicitous to conceal their circumſtances from the

the world, by which means they ſhut the door, as it were, againſt all charitable aſſiſtance. Some people, perhaps, may be apt to condemn this as an inſtance of pride and vanity. But, if they injure no-body by it, 'tis certainly a kind of pride that deſerves rather to be pitied than condemned. They act more nobly, and, I will venture to ſay, more virtuouſly too, than thoſe low-minded and mean ſpirited mortals, who are always complaining of their poverty, and are not aſhamed to receive the public charity, tho', in effect, they don't need it.

Here then, my Dear, is a wide and extenſive field for the exerciſe of your charity: here you may ſhew your generoſity not only in what you give, but alſo in the manner of giving it. Let your charity be always as large as the neceſſity of the family ſeems to require, and your own fortune can eaſily afford; and let it be conveyed in ſuch a manner, as may leaſt offend the delicacy of the receiver. Your grand mamma, I remember, was wont to contribute largely to the ſupport of ſeveral poor families in the neighbourhood, without ever letting them know from what hand theſe liberal contributions came; and, I believe, I could mention ſome ſimilar inſtances in my own conduct, were it not that it might ſavour too much of vanity.

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But perhaps, my Dear, you will tell me, that you are not able to give any charity at all; that your income is ſo very ſmall and inconſiderable, that it is hardly ſufficient to defray your own neceſſary expences.—Neceſſary expences! pray, my Dear, what do you mean by neceſſary expences? For, I am afraid, you conſider many things as neceſſary, which are altogether ſuperfluous and unneceſſary. Is it neceſſary, do you think, that you ſhould go to the play, the opera, and other public entertainments, once a week, or even once a month? Is it neceſſary, that you ſhould give twenty guineas for a gown, eight for a capuchin, three for a head-dreſs, or two for a fan? Is it neceſſary, that you ſhould throw away four or five ſhillings for a coach or chair every time you go a viſiting? On the contrary, is it not very poſſible to ſave ſomething in theſe, and a thouſand other articles of the like nature? Think with yourſelf, my Dear, and I dare ſay, you will frankly confeſs that it is. What now, if, inſtead of going to the play once a week, you ſhould only go once a month, or if, inſtead of once a month, you ſhould only go once in two months, and beſtow the money thus ſaved on ſome poor and indigent families? What if, inſtead of giving twenty guineas for a gown, you ſhould only give eighteen,

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and, with the remaining two, clothe ſome half dozen of fatherleſs children? What if, in place of throwing away three or four ſhillings on a coach or chair, you ſhould e'en walk it, when the road is good and the weather fair, and diſtribute the money among the blind and lame, whom you meet by the way! Will ſuch a conduct, do you think, diminiſh your happineſs? Do, my Dear, but try the experiment for once, and if, after trial, you don't acknowledge that, far from diminiſhing, it greatly encreaſes your happineſs, I will never bid you try it again. I know the goodneſs and tenderneſs of your heart ſo well, that I am not, in the leaſt, afraid to put the matter upon this footing.

When you go to the play, you behold a company of people, all of them happy or ſeemingly happy, and who would have been equally ſo, whether you had come there or not. But when you beſtow the price of your ticket upon a poor and diſtreſſed family, you ſee a number of your fellow creatures, whoſe happineſs, for the preſent, depends entirely on you; who conſider you as a kind of guardian-angel, ſent down from heaven to ſupply their wants and neceſſities. At your approach their ſorrowful hearts are filled with joy, their mournful countenances are overſpread with ſmiles: they breath forth their

their warmeſt wiſhes for your ſafety and welfare; even the tender babes are taught to liſp out their prayers for your happineſs, and to bleſs the lovely name of their dear Sophy. But, my dear, I feel ſomething more than I can expreſs; for no words are ſufficient to deſcribe the heart-felt pleaſure, which a generous mind enjoys in the exerciſe of this god-like virtue of charity; and for my own part, I would prefer one hour thus ſpent, to whole years of fooliſh mirth and diverſion.

The pleaſures of mirth (if indeed they may be called pleaſures) are taſteleſs and inſipid, and play only, as it were, on the ſurface of the mind: the pleaſures of charity are raviſhing and tranſporting; they ſenſibly affect the heart, and penetrate to the very inmoſt receſſes of the ſoul. The former are fleeting and tranſitory; the latter are permanent and durable. When I reflect on the charitable actions I performed twenty years ago, I enjoy almoſt as much pleaſure as I did in the very act of performing them; but when I call to mind the many agreeable evenings which I have ſpent at the play or opera, I feel no pleaſure; on the contrary, I feel a certain uneaſineſs ariſing from the conſideration of my having thrown away ſo much time to little or no purpoſe.

In a word, my dear, there is no article

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of expence, in which you may not ſave ſomething to give to the poor, even were your fortune much leſs than it is: nay, I will take upon me to affirm, that there is no perſon, who is one degree above a ſtate of abſolute beggary, but may and ought to reſerve ſomething for the ſame purpoſe. This, to be ſure, will require a good deal of frugality or œconomy. By the exerciſe of this virtue, the pooreſt may be charitable; without it, the richeſt muſt be uncharitable. If you live above your fortune, you will be perpetually pinched and ſtraitened in your circumſtances, and, in ſome ſenſe, will be as effectually poor as the beggar who implores your charity in the ſtreets: far from being able to ſupply the wants of others, you will continually be in want yourſelf. But if you live within your fortune, you will enjoy all the conveniences and pleaſures of life, with as much elegance and more ſatisfaction, than you could poſſibly have done in the former caſe; and, beſides, you will have wherewithal to relieve the neceſſities of the poor and indigent; a conduct, which, I hope, you will always have the virtue and good-ſenſe to obſerve.

Another virtue, my Dear Sophy, nearly a-kin to the former, and which you ought to cheriſh and cultivate with equal care, is bene-

benevolence, or an univerſal love and good-will to all your fellow-creatures without exception. For, however diſtinguiſhed by country, climate, language, or complexion; by difference of religion or politicks; by wealth or poverty, or by any other circumſtances; we are all the children of the ſame parent, we are all members of the ſame family, and therefore ſhould treat one another with the tender affection of brothers and ſiſters. The black African, the tawny American, and the white European, are equally intitled to our good wiſhes and friendly aſſiſtance. 'Tis of no conſequence where they were born, what language they ſpeak, or what religion they profeſs; whether they are high or low, rich or poor: 'tis enough that they are human creatures; that alone gives them a claim to our benevolence and good-will.

Nothing, indeed, is more abſurd than that narrow and ſelfiſh prejudice, which would confine our benevolence within the circle of our own acquaintance, our own country, our own religion, or within any other limits than thoſe of the human kind; and yet, abſurd as this prejudice is, there are few but what are tinctured with it in a greater or leſs degree. The men flatter us into an opinion, that the Britiſh ladies are the fineſt women in the world; and we, in return,

pay them the compliment of being the braveſt men in the univerſe; and, in fact, I believe, they are: but ſurely this can be no reaſon for deſpiſing, and much leſs for hating, the natives of other countries: to do ſo is always a ſign of a low, illiberal, and ungenerous mind.

The principal thing, that divides the world into ſo many ſects and parties, and is the cauſe of ſo much diſcord and diſſenſion, is a difference of opinion in point of politicks and religion. Of the latter of theſe I may poſſibly give you my ſentiments on ſome other occaſion; and with regard to the former, I ſhall only obſerve, that it is a ſubject entirely above your ſphere. I would not willingly reſign any of the privileges that properly belong to our ſex; but, I hope, I ſhall have all the ſenſible part of it on my ſide, when I affirm that the conduct and management of ſtate affairs is a thing, with which we have no concern. Perhaps our natural abilities are not equal to ſuch an arduous taſk: at any rate, our education, as it is now conducted, is too ſlight and ſuperficial to render us competent judges of theſe matters; and I have always thought it as ridiculous for a woman to put herſelf in a paſſion about political diſputes, as it would be for a man to ſpend his time in haranguing upon the colour of a ſilk, or

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the water of a diamond. The latter would ſurely incur the imputation of an empty fop: and the former, with equal juſtice, would deſerve the character of an impertinent trifler.

Beſides, my Dear, our paſſions are much more keen and violent than thoſe of the other ſex, or, which is the ſame thing, we are leſs capable to check and reſtrain them; and hence it is, that, when we unhappily engage in political conteſts, we never fail, by our intemperate heat to blow up the moſt trifling diſputes into open war and hoſtility. On the contrary, it is our duty to be the peace-makers, and not the incendiaries of the world.

Leaving it, therefore, to the men, to contend and diſpute about politicks as much as they pleaſe, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you the abſurd and ridiculous nature of thoſe little feuds and animoſities, that prevail among our ſex and interrupt the exerciſe of univerſal love and benevolence. If any young lady outſhines you at a ball or aſſembly; if ſhe is more richly and elegantly dreſſed; if ſhe has a greater number of admirers; if ſhe is more reſpected for her ſuperior ſenſe, wit, learning, and politeneſs: in a word, if ſhe excels you in any one particular, 'tis odds but you preſently begin to regard her with a jealous

eye, and to entertain a ſecret wiſh that ſhe were leſs happy and accompliſhed. And yet nothing can be more unreaſonable; for were ſhe leſs happy and accompliſhed than ſhe is, that would not render you more happy and accompliſhed than you are: the diminution of her merit would be no addition to yours. If ſhe eclipſes you in all public places, it muſt be by the force of ſome ſuperior qualities, which, if attainable, you ſhould endeavour to acquire, and for which, if they are not, you ſhould not envy her. If her dreſs is more rich and coſtly than yours, perhaps her rank too is higher, and her fortune larger, in which caſe, inſtead of envying, you ſhould rather commend her, for wearing a dreſs ſuitable to her ſtation; but if ſhe dreſſes above her rank and fortune ſhe is more to be pitied for her ridiculous folly, than to be envied for her imaginary happineſs. If ſhe is more admired and courted than you, 'tis very likely ſhe deſervs it: but ſuppoſe ſhe does not, who is to blame? not ſhe ſurely, but her admirers. If ſhe is more reſpected for her ſuperior ſenſe, wit, learning, and politeneſs; then her character becomes a proper object not of your envy, but ambition.

The envious perſon would reduce others to a level with herſelf, by leſſening their merit,

merit, without encreaſing her own; the ambitious perſon endeavours to raiſe herſelf to an equality with others, by encreaſing her own merit without diminiſhing theirs. 'Tis true, ſenſe and wit are the gift of nature, and cannot be acquired; but learning and politeneſs may: and therefore, while you are inferior to her in theſe, or in any other virtuous and genteel accompliſhment, I would not have you to reſt ſatisfied or contented, but, on the contrary, would adviſe you to exert your utmoſt abilities in order to obtain them, and render yourſelf as accompliſhed as her.

In ſhort, my Dear, envy, in whatever light it is conſidered, is a moſt unreaſonable paſſion. Nor is it more unreaſonable than it is fooliſh and impious; for it naturally tends to encreaſe our own miſery without impairing the happineſs of others, and is, at the ſame time, a tacit condemnation of the conduct of the Almighty, who is the author of all the happineſs which his creatures enjoy.

After all, my Dear, were this malevolent ſpirit confined to our own breaſts, and left to ferment and rankle there, we ſhould be leſs criminal, if not leſs miſerable. But the misfortune is, that it frequently, and indeed almoſt always, breaks out into open ſcan-

dal, calumny, and detraction. When once we wiſh a perſon ill, we ſoon begin to think ill of her too; and from thinking ill of any one, 'tis a very natural and eaſy tranſition to ſpeak ill of her likewiſe; and thus a door is opened for all the virulence of ſlander, obloquy, and defamation. From this vice, you know, I have endeavoured to diſſuade you in a former letter. At preſent, I ſhall only obſerve, that to ſpeak ill of others is as imprudent as it is odious; not only as it will provoke them to repay us in our own coin, but alſo as it is a ſhrewd ſign of our being guilty of the very ſame crimes, which we lay to their charge. I have ſeen one lady declaim againſt proud people with ſo much vehemence and acrimony, that, at length, all who heard her were fully ſatisfied that ſhe herſelf muſt be one of the number; and I have known another inveigh ſo bitterly againſt immodeſt women, as to convince all the ignorant part of the company that ſhe was extremely virtuous, and all the ſenſible part of it that ſhe was quite the reverſe.

Before I conclude, my Dear, let me recommend to you the ſtudy and practice of politeneſs or good manners, which hath ſuch an immediate dependence upon good-nature, that it is no other than that virtue reduced

reduced into an art. But tho' it be an art, yet perhaps it is impoſſible to lay down any fixt and invariable rules for the attainment of it. For, if it conſiſt, as it certainly does, in pleaſing thoſe with whom we converſe, and if the only way to pleaſe people be to gratify their particular humours, and if the humours of mankind be as different as their faces, then it ſhould ſeem to follow, that the rules of good-breeding muſt be as many and as various as the complexions of men, which are generally allowed to be infinite. The truth is, no perſon can be well-bred without an equal ſhare of good-ſenſe and good-nature: good ſenſe to diſtinguiſh the various tempers of mankind; and good-nature, by which we are prompted to accommodate ourſelves to theſe tempers, as far as the precepts of virtue will permit. Without theſe two qualifications, a lady may be formal, ceremonious, preciſe, or what you will, but ſhe can never be truly polite: and ſhe who ſhould treat the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the ſprightly and the grave, the reſerved and the frank, with the ſame inſipid uniformity of behaviour, would have no more title to the character of a polite lady, than the ſtiff-walking dancing-maſter has to that of the fine gentleman.

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reduced into an art. But tho' it be an art, yet perhaps it is impoſſible to lay down any fixt and invariable rules for the attainment of it. For, if it conſiſt, as it certainly does, in pleaſing thoſe with whom we converſe, and if the only way to pleaſe people be to gratify their particular humours, and if the humours of mankind be as different as their faces, then it ſhould ſeem to follow, that the rules of good-breeding muſt be as many and as various as the complexions of men, which are generally allowed to be infinite. The truth is, no perſon can be well-bred without an equal ſhare of good-ſenſe and good-nature: good ſenſe to diſtinguiſh the various tempers of mankind; and good-nature, by which we are prompted to accommodate ourſelves to theſe tempers, as far as the precepts of virtue will permit. Without theſe two qualifications, a lady may be formal, ceremonious, preciſe, or what you will, but ſhe can never be truly polite: and ſhe who ſhould treat the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the ſprightly and the grave, the reſerved and the frank, with the ſame inſipid uniformity of behaviour, would have no more title to the character of a polite lady, than the ſtiff-walking dancing-maſter has to that of the fine gentleman.

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Some people expect to be uſed with a great deal of form and ceremony, and to theſe you ſhould ſhow it: others hate every thing that has the leaſt appearance of formality or ſtiffneſs, and upon theſe you ſhould never obtrude it: to be extremely ceremonious to them, is, in effect, to be extremely unpolite. The great ſecret ſeems to be to preſerve a conſtant diſpoſition to make all about you happy, and then truſt to the immediate ſuggeſtions of your own prudence for the moſt effectual method of doing it; for, ſhould you even miſtake with regard to the means, yet, where the intention is evident, you will, in ſome meaſure, obtain your end: you will paſs, if not for a very polite, at leaſt for a very good-natured lady.

But, my Dear,, as I have already mentioned ſome of the principal rules of politeneſs in my letter on converſation, and in ſeveral others, and as it is an art which may be better learned by practice than precept, I would have you to regulate your conduct, in this reſpect, by the example of your aunt, who indeed is one of the moſt polite and well-bred ladies I ever knew: and if you carefully obſerve and faithfully imitate her manner, you will, in time,

time, become ſo likewiſe: which that you may, is the ſincere wiſh of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LETTER XL.

My dear SOPHY,

AS this will probably be the laſt letter I ſhall have an opportunity of writing you for ſome time, I ſhall employ it in giving you a few directions concerning that moſt important of all ſubjects, I mean the ſubject of religion.

Religion, my Dear, conſiſts in a full conviction and firm belief of the being, perfections, and providence of God, and in the faithful and conſcientious diſcharge of all the duties he hath enjoined us. The arguments for the being of a Deity, are too many and various to come within the compaſs of a letter; and, beſides, to treat them with

with proper accuracy and judgment, is a taſk, for which, I confeſs, I am, by no means, qualified. But in order to ſupply what I have neither time nor abilities to perform, I would have you to read ſome of the beſt books on that ſubject, ſuch as Fenelon on the Exiſtence, Clarke on the Attributes, and Sherlock on the Providence of God.

With regard to the duties of religion and morality, they are ſo plain and obvious, as to be eaſily underſtood by any perſon of an ordinary capacity, and ſo juſt and reaſonable, as to approve themſelves to every unprejudiced and impartial mind. Theſe you will find clearly explained, and ſtrongly inculcated, in the ſermons of Barrow, Tillotſon, Seed, Hoadly, Sherlock, and ſeveral others. For the evidences of Chriſtianity, Wilkins, Butler, Locke, and Addiſon will furniſh you with unanſwerable proofs. All theſe books, however, I have recommended to your peruſal, not with a view to ſuperſede the neceſſity of ſtudying, but, on the contrary, to enable you the better to underſtand the holy ſcriptures, the only infallible rule of our faith and manners, and of which you ought to read a part every day.

As you had the happineſs to be born a member of the church of England, I would have you ſteadily to adhere to it thro' the whole courſe of your life, and punctually

to

to obſerve all its forms and ceremonies; which yet are of no further avail, than as they tend to inſpire you with an ardent love to God, and an univerſal benevolence and good-will to all your fellow-creatures. Whilſt, therefore, you profeſs yourſelf a member of the Engliſh church, let me entreat you to entertain a good opinion of, and to cheriſh a friendly diſpoſition towards all thoſe, who may happen to differ from you in their religious ſentiments.

The Chriſtian church is unhappily divided into a variety of different ſects, the zealots of which treat one another with ſuch an implacable ſpirit of reſentment, as is directly oppoſite to the true genius of Chriſtianity: while they endeavour to convince the world that they are more religious than their neighbours, they plainly ſhew themſelves to have no religion at all. Which of all theſe different ſects comes neareſt to the truth I will not take upon me to determine: but thus much, I think, I may venture to affirm, that good people of every ſect will be ſaved, and that the wicked of every ſect will be condemned.

In that great and awful day, when you ſhall be ſummoned before the impartial Judge of the univerſe, to give an account of your behaviour, the queſtion will not be,

be, to what ſect you belonged, or under what form of church-government you lived; but only how far you have acted up to the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, in loving the Lord your God with all your heart, your ſoul and mind, and your neighbour as yourſelf, and in performing all the duties of a good, pious, and virtuous life. Such a conduct, and ſuch only, can qualify you for an admiſſion into thoſe heavenly manſions, where love and charity, joy and gladneſs, perpetually reign; and that, after a long and happy life, you may be received into theſe bliſsful regions, is the ſincere wiſh and earneſt prayer of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your fond and affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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